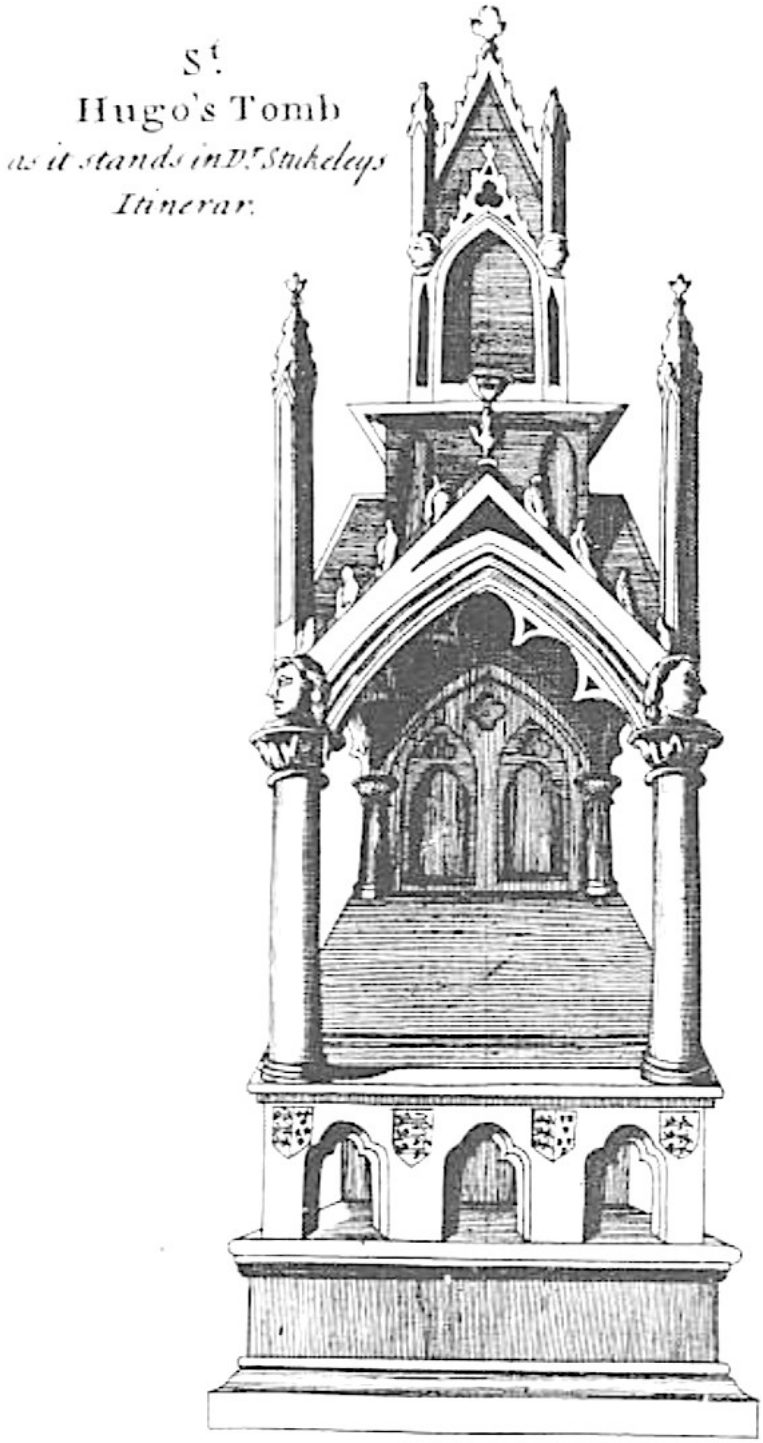
Dr. Peter Aldag

Jewry in England: A Thousand-Year History

Volume 1: From the Earliest Years To Expulsion (669-1290)



Author's Dedication:

To my wife, with the deepest gratitude for her collaboration, without which this book could not have come into being.

Translator's Dedication:

This translation is dedicated to Kevin MacDonald and Ron Unz, two inspirational heroes of science. Because the truth shall set us all free.

Translator's Foreword

My decision to take a closer look at the obscure 1943 opus *Das Judentum in England* as a subject of serious intellectual consideration came after glancing through the various lists of chapter titles for its seven volumes. I had been intrigued to see if its author, Peter Aldag, would provide solid evidence for Stephen Mitford Goodson's claim of Jewish involvement in the establishment of the Bank of England, as was made in the South African banker's infamous *A History of Central Banking* (2014). In fact, as I came to discover, not only did Aldag not support Goodson's assertion, he provided compelling evidence to the contrary. In a similar vein, when I looked to see if there had been a Jewish role in the fraud surrounding what latterly became known rather euphemistically as the South Sea Bubble (but which Aldag rendered more accurately in German as *der Südsee-Skandal*), I found the author telling his German readers that his investigations had yielded no evidence of Jewish involvement in the fraud, and he effectively berated a German contemporary for alleging Jewish misbehaviour without providing solid evidence. To me, this indicated that I was reading an author on the Jewish Question who cared about the truth over ethnic propaganda, the rarity of which immediately piqued my interest in the work.

Nevertheless, it would be disingenuous to suggest that this German lawyer,* who updated his manuscript while his country was three years into a war with Britain, did not have a strong social identity which informed his work. Indeed, it is an open question to what extent the 'science' around group identity can ever truly be 'scientific', or, as Professor Kevin MacDonald put it in his *Culture of Critique*: 'The truly doubtful proposition for an evolutionist is whether real social science as a disinterested attempt to understand human behavior is at all possible.' All that a scientist can do is recognise, as MacDonald did, the potential biases and blind-spots in his own analysis, and state these openly, but not let the inexistence of a perfect vessel preclude the advancement of knowledge. As Professor MacDonald himself said in the same book: 'In the end, does it really matter if my motivation at this point is less than pristine? Isn't the only question whether I am right?' Being human, Aldag may have been a similarly less than pristine vessel, but he too cites his sources, the vast majority of which are impeccable.

In the spirit of ensuring maximum transparency and reliability, wherever possible, this translation returns to the original sources used by the author, not only to verify his assertions, but also to be able to accurately reproduce all original English-language quotations. Where additional evidence is available which indicates an element in the text to be needlessly ambiguous or misleading, or where there is an alternative viewpoint worthy of consideration, clearly marked translator commentary has been added into the footnotes, or less commonly, within the text itself. The resulting, one might say, *midrashic* presentation, in which many of the author's 2896 footnotes have been extended by commentary, may deter all but the most determined from attempting this text, but my interest was to ensure that academically-inclined readers like myself had access to the relevant data (in all of its sometimes complex but accurate detail), to ensure that they could have confidence in what they were reading.

For those so minded to tackle such an extensive work, Aldag's stunning piece of scholarship should hopefully be an exciting and ground-breaking addition to the existing corpus of knowledge. Care should nevertheless be taken not to confuse the text written by the author himself with later politicising additions to the text by the publisher, Nordland Verlag (Berlin). Even hostile critic C. C.

Aronfeld, writing in the *Jewish Chronicle* of 7th February 1986, admits that the Hitler quotations bookending the author's Preface, and other less than 'scientific' elements of the book, were likely added post-hoc for political expediency, and were not the work of the author himself:

> The final touch – as regards form not content – was added by more seasoned pens in the Ministry of Propaganda. They probably are responsible for parts of the Introduction and the equally militant epilogue, also for many of the more viciously violent turns of phrase.

I would also suggest that the somewhat lurid title given to the spin-off publication of volumes 6 and 7, *Juden beherrschen England,* jars with the tone of the book itself. This would indicate that the choice of title was likewise a commercial publishing decision, as within his carefully written work the author regularly hedges his statements in the interests of accuracy.

For this reason, this is not a work simply for 'anti-Semites' looking to have their biases confirmed. While it is indeed true to say that this is a historiography from the Gentile perspective, a rare thing indeed at this point in Western history, it would be a mistake to presume that a Jewish and non-radical Gentile readership, able to stomach the anti-Jewish elements mentioned above, would not enjoy this work and take a lot from it. Indeed, the history of the Jews in England is very much the history of England, and those Englishmen who are uninterested in Jewish history but looking to gain insight into their own condition, will likewise benefit greatly from this study, as it is essentially a history of how money and power flows, often corruptly, through the country's various estates, institutions and personages over the course of a millennium. Just as shadows throw the features of a subject into relief and makes them discernible, so the character of the English nation is inadvertently brought into focus through the telling of its relations with this formidable Other.

In an ideal world, in which the Jewish group evolutionary strategy and the historiography of Jewish-Gentile relations were just as open to scientific enquiry as the mechanisms of photosynthesis, the potential points of ethnic bias found in this book would be openly debated by Jewish and Gentile scholars alike, and where necessary, disproven or refined. Such open dialogue would also pave the way for a future in which we might be able to transcend the seemingly eternal tragic cycle of history, after which we could move towards the arguably more minor task of conquering inter-galactic space travel. But in the meantime, this book will hopefully spark the interest of the handful of fearless men who have put the quest for truth above the dangers of public defamation or dynamic silence. It is to two such men that I dedicate my translation, in the hope that the spirit of the author is somehow able to see his great work make an impact in a new century.

*Dr. Peter Aldag's real name was Dr. Fritz Paul Heinrich Krüger; he was born in 1905 or 1906, and he died in 1979. As his MI5 file is sealed until 2058, and the only published details about him come from interested sources which are unreliable even among themselves, e. g. Graham Macklin states he was in the SS, while Aronfeld states that he was only a 'nominal member' of the NSDAP and 'kept aloof from the Party', I have decided to forego the limited biography I could provide, which may have been largely erroneous in any case, and let the man's own scholarship speak for his character. He is also the author of *Dollar Imperialismus* (1943).

Jewry in England: A Thousand-Year History

The volumes of this study:

Volume 1: From the Earliest Years To Expulsion (669-1290)

Volume 2: The Return of the Jews Under Cromwell (1290-1658)

Volume 3: Royal Protectors of the Jews (1658-1714)

Volume 4: Early Emancipation Struggles and Jewish Defeat (1714-1753)

Volume 5: Increasing Influence of the Jews (1754-1830)

Volume 6: Emancipation (1830-1866)

Volume 7: Jewish Domination (1867-1942)

Preface to *Das Judentum in England*

‘The best way to know the Jew is to study the path which he has taken within the body of other peoples over the course of the centuries.’

Adolf Hitler: *Mein Kampf*, Anniversary Edition 1935, pp. 337-8.

The above quotation was the guiding principle under which this work was created. Given the fact that the Jewish Question is one of the most controversial topics in the West, it can only be dealt with through conscientious research based on unassailable evidence.

You will only be able to convince the doubters, the skeptics and the know-it-alls if you are able to produce inviolable and scientifically based documents.

From this perspective, I have devoted myself to the study of Jewish and official English sources over many years of on-site work, and have not only made great use of the daily press as source material, but also many old laws, documents and manuscripts in order to gain an objective understanding of the changing history of Jewry in England. I have deliberately refrained from giving my own opinions and instead have limited myself to a sober and dispassionate recording of the facts as they emerged from the great wealth of material. The result is shocking. In a nutshell it is that the Jews rule England!

My activities did not go unnoticed by Jewish emigrants from Germany, often my fellow readers in the British Museum in London, where I wrote most of my present work. They tried by all means and with help to prevent me from continuing with my labour. I owe it to anti-Jewish British friends that these individuals only achieved their goal at a time when my task was practically finished.

When I returned from a short visit to Germany in the summer of 1939, I fell victim to the machinations of Jewish cliques when their willing tool, the immigration officer Mr. Gold (formerly Goldstein and a native of Germany) denied me entry.

Reason: ‘You are writing a book against the Jews.’ ‘Not against the Jews,’ I answered, ‘but *about* the Jews.’ All argumentation was fruitless. Mr. Gold's superior, a non-Jewish Briton, echoed his remarks and emphasised that ‘his government, unlike the German one, was on friendly terms with the Jews and therefore had to stop everything that could potentially be detrimental to Jewish interests. Even a purely academic study of the Jewish Question would be viewed in England as a gross abuse of the right to hospitality, and anyone guilty of such an offence was an undesirable foreigner who should not be readmitted.’

‘In England, this country of the “freest” democracy, the Jew exerts almost unlimited control indirectly through public opinion. And yet, even there, an incessant struggle is taking place between the forces of traditional British statecraft and the devastating forces of Jewish influence.’

Adolf Hitler: *Mein Kampf*, pp. 720-1.

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The Earliest Years

To this day, the beginnings of Jewish immigration to England are shrouded in complete darkness. Nevertheless – or perhaps because of this – much effort has been made to shed light on the matter.

It is probably due to clever inspiration from the Jews that many English writers[1] are of the opinion that the Jews visited England for reasons of trade as early as the time of King Solomon. Indeed, even serious scholars,[2] under the influence of this clever propaganda, have claimed that the British, prior to the immigration of the Angles and Saxons, were descendants of the so-called *Ten Lost Tribes of Israel*, who were led into captivity by the Assyrians.

It may also be briefly mentioned that, according to the Jews and their allies, the word 'Britain' is of Semitic origin. Herodotus referred to the British Isles as 'Cassiterides', which means 'Tin Islands'. The word 'Britannike,' which was later used in the Greek language, was merely a mutilation of the Hebrew 'Barat Anach' and must also be translated as Tin Islands.[3] But all of this is likely nothing more than speculation, and it may indeed be the case that the wish is father to the thought that ancient England should have had such close connections with the original Jews.

The first documentary evidence of the presence of Jews in England – most likely as permanent settlers – can be found in a statute from the year 669. This statute, named Liber Poenitentialis Theodori Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis Ecclesiae, was enacted by Theodore, the then Archbishop of Canterbury, and included the provision that a Christian woman who accepted gifts from unbaptised Jews or who voluntarily sinned with them (e.g. extramarital intercourse), was to be excommunicated for a year, live in the worst conditions of poverty and then do nine years of punishment. If, on the other hand, she got involved with a heathen, she would be punished for seven years.[4] What is particularly interesting here is that dealings with a Jew were punished more severely than dealings with a despised Gentile.

Another regulation stated that anyone who, contrary to the decision of the Council of Nicaea, used the Jewish calendar to celebrate Easter on the 14th day of the lunar month, was to be excommunicated if he did not repent.[5] Furthermore, a Christian who accepted meat or unleavened bread from unbaptised Jews, or who drank with them and participated in their ungodliness, was to repent with bread and water for 40 days.[6] Meanwhile, if a Christian sold another Christian – even if this person were his slave – to a Jew, he was said to be unworthy of living among Christians until he had bought the Christian back. If, for some reason, it was not possible for him to do so, he was to use the price he had received to redeem someone else from slavery, and abstain from all meat and wine for three years.[7]

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1 Hyamson: *History*, p. 1 ff.; Hyamson: *Lost Tribes*; Margoliouth: *History*, Vol. I, p. 1 ff.; see especially the writers mentioned in Hyamson's *History* p. 6.
2 Hyamson: *History*, p. 3 and *Lost Tribes*, p. 673 ff.; Margoliouth: *History*, Vol. I, p. 22 ff.
3 Margoliouth: *History*, Vol. I, p. 22 and Hyamson: *History*, p. 1.
4 *Ancient Laws* p. 282; Liber Poenitentialis XVI § 35.
5 *Ancient Laws* p. 295; Liber Poenitentialis XLII § 4. Translator's note: The 14th day of the lunar month is when the Jews sacrifice the lamb for Passover, and was used as the traditional way of calculating Easter, until a controversy arose due to this date sometimes falling on a weekday (known as the 'Easter Controversy'), and a change in this usage was formally decreed by the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D.
6 *Ancient Laws* p. 300; Liber Poenitentialis XVI § 1.
7 *Ancient Laws* p. 300; Liber Poenitentialis XVI § 3.

Finally, it was not permitted to celebrate mass in a place where Jews or other unbelievers were buried.[8]

Under Ecgbert, Archbishop of York, who lived from 735 to 766, references to Jews can also be found in a law he issued called Excerptiones Egberti Eboracensis Archiepiscopi. According to this law, it was determined that no Christian should dare to profess Judaism or take part in its festivals.[9] It also stipulated that a Christian who sold another Christian to the Jews would be excommunicated from the church.[10]

Some people are of the opinion that these laws did not refer to Jews who were resident in England,[11] but one cannot see why else the lawmakers of the time would find it necessary to draft such extensive legislation. Furthermore, the issues around Christian and Jewish co-existence must have needed to practically resolved because these laws feature in the official compendium *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, which evidences the need for permanent regulation.

In a Jewish book dating from 1575 [*Emek Habacha* by Joseph Cohen] there is a reference to the fact that, in the year 810, many Jews fled from Germany to England and Spain to escape persecution.[12] It must be left open to debate whether this information is in fact correct.

Finally, a law is said to have existed under Edward the Confessor (c. 1003-1066), according to which the Jews were considered the king's property and were therefore under his protection.[13] Margoliouth is willing to recognise this assertion as valid,[14] and it must be stated that this ordinance is also included in the official compendium of ancient laws.*

*Translator's note: This law is found in Latin and English on page 3 of William Romaine's 1753 *An Answer to a Pamphlet* [see Translator's Bibliography]. The English translation is below:

> Be it known also, that all the Jews, wheresoever they be within the Realm, ought to be under the King's Guard and Protection, as his Vassals, neither can any one of them put himself under the Power of any rich Person, without the King's Licence: For the Jews and all they have belong to the King. And if any Person shall detain them, or their Money, the King may claim them (if he pleases) as his own Property.

8 *Ancient Laws* p. 303; *Liber Poenitentialis* XVI § 1.

9 *Ancient Laws* p. 340. Translator's note: Margoliouth [*Anglo-Hebrews*, p. 5] states that this law was promulgated in 740 A.D.

10 Idem.

11 Jacobs, *The Jews of Angevin England*, p. 3. Translator's note: Jacobs believed that that these ecclesiastical ordinances were made to regulate the 'passing intercourse with Gallo-Jewish slave dealers', the type to whom Pope Gregory I was referring when he complained about the sale of Christians to Jewish slave dealers in the north of Gaul (*ibid*.). We know that these Jewish slavers trafficked in English people, certainly in English children, thanks to the famous story about Pope Gregory spying two blond-haired slave children in Rome, asking their provenance, and on being told that they were Angles, replying '*Non Angli, sed angeli!*' [Not Angles, but angels!]. Jacobs (pp. 3-4) made the following disturbingly triumphalist remark on recalling the tale: 'Remembering that slaves have no nationality, I would suggest that if Gregory had stated the prosaic fact in his world-famous remarks about the chubby, blond-haired lads exposed for sale on the Roman slave-market, he would have said, "*Non Angli nec angeli sed – Judaeorum servi.*"' [They are not Angles, nor angels, but slaves of the Jews.]

12 Hyamson: *History*, p. 5; Jacobs, p. 4.

13 *Ancient Laws*, p. 195.

14 Margoliouth: *History,* Vol. I, p. 49; *Anglo-Hebrews* p. 5. Translator's note: In the view of Jacobs (p. 3): 'The reference in the Laws of Edward the Confessor is an interpolation, *temp*. Hen. II.'

The First Wave of Immigration

In 1066, William the Conqueror landed in England, and not long afterwards the entirety of English life saw itself transformed. Until the conquest by William I, there had only been very loose connections with the European mainland, while relationships within the country itself barely extended beyond the individual counties. Trade was mainly by barter and the circulation of money was therefore very limited.

William came from France and therefore laid the foundation for the subsequent close relations between these two countries. Under Norman rule, civilisation in England also advanced, which in turn caused an increase in demand for goods and services. In the period that followed, difficulties were encountered in satisfying this demand through barter alone, which led to an increase in the need for liquid money.

In addition, as a result of the initial hostility of the English population after the conquest, William was forced to enlarge his standing army, for which he again needed money, but which was not sufficiently available in the country. Even the barons who were called upon to finance the army could hardly raise the necessary funds, which made the desire for a money economy universal.

The Jews of that time controlled trade and finance to an almost greater extent than today. However, their number in England must not have been sufficient to cover demand. That fact soon became known in northern France, where there were large settlements of rich Jews.

Apparently these Jews turned to William the Conqueror and asked for permission to immigrate to England.[15] Various writers are of the opinion that the Normandy Jews were even invited by William.[16] Although these writers cannot provide documentary evidence for this assertion, they feel that it can reasonably be concluded from the country's economic situation.

Others argue that the Jews paid the king a sum of money for the right to immigrate to England.[17]

Most of them came from Rouen. After a short time we find numerous Jews in the cities of England. The first larger Jewish colonies were probably founded in Oxford and Cambridge, as there is a note in a document made around 1075 in which the ancient writer found ‘the Jews settled and their numbers great in Oxford’, with a similar observation regarding Cambridge.[18] The fact that Jewish immigration was considerable is evident from the fact that, as early as 1070, it was apparently deemed necessary to determine the legal status of the Jews by law.[19] It was then stipulated that the Jews settled in the kingdom were under the protection of the king and were his property.

Even at that time, one can notice the same signs of Jewish behaviour which are familiar to us today. Until their expulsion from England they were a people unto themselves. They remained true to their entire way of life, which was completely different from the English one. Without any coercion and of their own free will, they settled in a specific part of the city, and if possible, always

15 Jacobs: *The Jews of Angevin England*, p. 39; Gross: *Exchequer,* p. 172; Rigg, p. 10, Freeman, Vol. V, p. 818 ff,
16 Margoliouth: *History*, Vol. I, p. 50.
17 Prynne, p. 2; B. B.: *Historical and Law Treatise*, p. 3.
18 Jacobs, *The Jews…* pp. 4-5. Translator’s note: Quotation reproduced verbatim from original source.
19 Margoliouth: *History*, Vol. I, p. 52.

near the market square.[20] They never cared about the most honourable and important concern of a nation: the defence of the land.[21] In those days of strict Christianity, they did not take the host population's values into account. They neither showed the necessary respect for the cross, nor allowed themselves to be deterred from carrying out their religious service with all the customs that were alien to the English. Deceased Jews were buried in special cemeteries, initially only in London.[22] Their food and drink were also completely different from those of their Christian neighbours. They refused invitations to eat a meal prepared by a Christian in a Christian household.[23] The animals for slaughter had to be killed under certain rites. It was not uncommon for the Jews to reject any spoiled food as inedible for themselves, but offer it for sale to Christians as perfectly good.[24]

There were already many Christian maids and wet nurses in the Jewish household who reported horrific things about their habits.[25]

There are hardly any Jews of this period to be found in any craft. Although their rights as merchants were limited in certain respects by the regulations of the guilds,[26] under a law of King John in 1201 they were generally free to buy whatever was brought to them, with the exception of certain church goods, and were allowed to sell the items pledged to them after a year and a day.[27]

20 Abrahams, pp. 6-7; Hyamson: *History*, p. 10; Rigg, p. XI.
21 *Rogeri de Houedene*, Vol. II, p. 261; *Gesta Henrici*, Vol. I, p. 279.
22 *Gesta Henrici*, Vol. I, p. 182; *Rogeri de Houedene*, Vol. II, p. 137; William of Malmesbury, Vol. II, p. 371.
23 Abrahams, p. 6.
24 Jacobs, *The Jews of Angevin England*, pp. 54, 178. These references relate to kosher food and its preparation, implying that the English were sold food that was not kosher, rather than spoiled.
25 *Gesta Henrici*, Vol. I, p. 230; *Rogeri de Houedene*, Vol. II, p. 180. Translator's note: Both references identically reproduce a decree from Pope Alexander III, made at the Third Lateran Council of 1179, while ruled, among other things, that Christians should not live with Jews (or Muslims), act as their wet nurses, or serve them in any capacity. The decree does not reference any complaint about Jewish behaviour, although it may be argued that this decree came as a response to such complaints.
26 Cunningham, p. 336 ff.
27 Hyamson: *History*, p. 9; Rigg, p. XII; *Select Civil Pleas*, Vol. I, p. 3 (Case 7).

Kings Favour the Jews

Such favourable treatment of the Jews can only be explained by their position in relation to the monarch of the time. As property of the king, they were subject only to his jurisdiction. They also had an exceptional position in that, unlike the English, they were allowed to charge interest on loans. Under the king's protection, the Jews almost exclusively practiced the business of lending money, and were even encouraged to do so by the king because he in turn demanded a certain percentage of the money, as a tax on their transactions. As a result, Jews were one of his largest sources of income. Given the size of their business and the level of interest, the Jews made large profits. No law stipulated a limit to the interest rate, and the floodgates were wide open to usury. Interest rates of 43.5% were considered standard[28] and 50 to 80% were by no means uncommon.[29] It is therefore not surprising that the wealth of the Jews was described as nothing short of incredible.

The Jews lived in the most magnificent (and at the same time most fortified) houses in the cities of that time, some of which were even able to withstand a siege for a short period. The populace rightly looked down on the Jews as intruders and a foreign body, especially since the individual Englishman was substantially in debt due to the high interest rates and consequently at the complete mercy of the Jews. It is therefore understandable that feelings of enmity towards the Jews grew slowly but steadily, although it was not openly shown, since the Jews enjoyed unlimited protection as the property of the king.[30] This even went so far that at the time of William the Conqueror (1066-1087) and his successor William Rufus (1087-1100), the Jews did not have to pay any special taxes, unlike the English.[31] William Rufus not only generally favoured the Jews in every aspect of life, but he even studied their doctrine and came to the decision to make his conversion to the Jewish religion dependent on the outcome of a scholarly debate between bishops and rabbis, which he attended as an observer.[32] Some of the content of this debate has been preserved and is very interesting as a contemporary document.[33] At that time, too, there was an argument about the value (or otherwise) of the Christian and Jewish religions, with both parties claiming victory in these learned discussions.

In the last years of William Rufus' reign, the Jewish colony of Rouen petitioned the king to prevent the Jews there from converting to Christianity. Given that the Jews had supported their

28 Rigg, p. XIII; Leonard, p. 104 ff.

29 Belloc, p. 218. Translator's note: It should be stated, however, that according to Rigg (*Select Pleas…*, p. xiii) that during the reign of Henry II the ordinary rate of lending was set at 43⅓ percent per annum, which in the thirteenth century became recognised as the legal maximum, and compound interest was strictly forbidden. Certainly, by the 1230s of Henry III's reign, the legislation for the above was laid down (Stacey, 'The English Jews Under Henry III', p. 44, n.22), but certain loans between Jews (which may have been a form of 'inter-bank lending') continued to go as high as 4d per pound per week, or 87%, as evidenced by the documentation (*idem*, p. 48, n.44).

30 Hyamson: *History*, p. 5 ff.; Belloc, p. 216; Prynne, p. 3.

31 Hyamson: *History*, p. 11. Translator's note: Hyamson writes: 'From the first three Norman kings the Jews suffered neither exaction nor annoyance. William Rufus and Henry I obtained by violence large sums of money from their Christian subjects; but they spared the Jews. For instance, the 10,000 marks needed for the purchase of Normandy from Robert were raised with great difficult, the abbeys, in some instances, having to melt down their plate in order to provide their contributions; yet no levy was made on the Jews.' However, this honeymoon period was not to last.

32 Margoliouth: *History*, Vol. I, p. 53.

33 Jacobs, *The Jews of Angevin England*, pp. 7-12; Holinshed, Vol. III, p. 27 ff. Translator's note: Jonas Hanway [pp. 59-60, see Translator's Bibliography] writing in 1735, reported that these disputations led to some Jews openly deriding Christianity, which in turn caused many of them to have to flee London in fear for their lives, and 'two hundred of them were converted to Christianity, in one day, at Dunstable'. However, given that Hanway does not give a source for this tale, it may be that he was simply repeating a popular pro-Christian legend that had subsequently arisen after the real events of the religious disputations.

petition with a large sum of money, William Rufus did not hesitate to comply with their request, and tried to bring the baptised Jews back to the ‘religion of [their] nation’ by using the harshest threats.[34] On one occasion, a single Jew offered the king sixty silver marks if the king would bring his son, who had converted to Christianity, back to Judaism. The king agreed to this deal and had the rich Jew’s son brought before him. Despite the king’s insult towards him (‘thou dunghill knave’) and threat of violence for non-compliance (‘I shall cause thine eyes to be plucked out of thine head’), the young man stood firm and boldly explained to the king that he did not understand the king’s attitude towards him, saying that if the king were really a Christian, it was his duty to bring his subjects *to* Christ, not to seek to separate them from Him. The king, confounded, then desisted from what he had begun. However, the convert’s father was angry and demanded his money back, which the king refused. Only after lengthy arguments was it agreed to repay thirty silver marks.[35] Prynne, a 17th-century historian recounting the deeds of the Jews, summed up the incident with the following words:

> By this History we may perceive what a prevailing Engine the Jews money is, both to scrue them into Christian Kingdoms, though the most bitter, inveterate, professed Enemies of Christ himself, Christians and Christianity, and how their money can induce even Christian Princes to perpetrate the most unchristian, and antichristian actions; and enforce by threats and violence, even converted Christian Jews to renounce their Christianity, and apostatise to their former Jewish Errors which they had quite renounced. And do not they still work even by the self-same Money Engine?[36]

During the reign of Henry I (1100-1135) we hear next to nothing about the Jews, which may be a sign that they continued to pursue their trade and were able to accumulate wealth. The first extant documentary evidence of the presence of Jews in London occurs during this time. For the first time there is mention of a Jewish street in a document.[37]

In the first years of King Stephen's reign (1135-1154) the Jews continued to enjoy the favour of the royal family and were therefore able to accumulate more and more wealth through usury. However, everything was about to change.

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34 Hyamson: *History*, p. 11; Margoliouth: *History*, p. 54. Translator’s note: The word ‘colony’ is the direct translation from the German original, which I have used to be true to the author, rather than opting for the preferred modern euphemism ‘community’. It may be noted that the term ‘colonisation’ was used unproblematically by scholar Joe Hillaby in his 2003 paper ‘Jewish Colonisation in the Twelfth Century’ [ed. Skinner, *Jews in Medieval Britain*].

35 Margoliouth: *History*, Vol. I, p. 56; Hyamson: *History*, p. 12; Prynne, p. 5.

36 Prynne, p. 5-6. Translator’s note: This quotation, along with other quoted elements earlier in the paragraph, are reproduced verbatim from the original source.

37 Price, p. 17.

The Church Against the Jews

The church had initially been fairly indifferent to the Jews, but to some extent had favoured their settlement in cities in the early years. As civilisation increased, monetary transactions became increasingly necessary. Since Christians were forbidden by canon law to charge interest on loans, this business was left to the Jews, which spared the church from having to make changes to the canon law to conform with the needs of the time. In other words, economic development would have required the abolition of the ban on interest, but with the arrival of the Jews this became unnecessary because people preferred to leave the field to them.[38] This church position meant that, not only were the Jews increasing their wealth on a daily basis through eye-watering usury, but the English themselves were being bled dry and were already completely indebted to them when Stephen ascended the throne. The Jews ruthlessly collected the claims when they were due and thus drove the English from their ancestral land. Although they were not allowed to be landowners, the king granted Jews the right to receive land as collateral from their debtors.[39] The Jews were even able to appropriate half of the land until the debt was paid off.[40] The church could not be indifferent to this impoverishment of the English if only for its own material interests, since under these circumstances it was hardly able to collect the tithes to which it was entitled.

The church probably also secretly hoped to convert a large number of Jews to Christianity over time. However, around the year 1140 and even before that, the church must have realised that its expectations in this regard were not only mistaken, but that the Jews, in turn, had made successful attempts to convert the English to Judaism with the help of their money.[41] This led to priests being sent into the cities which had a Jewish presence to preach forcefully against Jewish teachings.

From all this it is clear that the church now began to take an interest in the Jewish Question and to exploit the people's antipathy for its own purposes. Events that were taking place outside of England were also useful to this end.

From the end of the 11th century onwards, the Crusading movement began to spread over the European mainland, particularly in Germany and France. There too, the population was hostile to anything non-Christian and, as a result, the long-slumbering hatred towards the Jews awakened everywhere, not least because the Jews also played the role of usurer on the continent.

The first Norman kings were still too busy consolidating their power in England to pay much attention to the Crusading movement, but this was to change in the first years of Stephen's reign. It was also noticed that Stephen changed in his attitude towards the Jews, especially since the people's growing antipathy towards them could not remain hidden from him. Although Stephen did not initially take any major action, he made it clear that he would no longer stand in the way of the people's wishes. The king’s change of heart resulted from the following event:

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38 [Footnote is missing from original German document]

39 Hyamson: *History*, p. 8 ff.

40 P. C. Webb: *The Question,* p. 10 ff.; Madox, Vol. I, p. 168.

41 Hyamson: *History*, p. 22. Translator’s note: Aldag apparently rests his assertion on Hyamson’s phrase ‘…it appears that the Jews were at least as successful as the Christians in making converts’. Note that this phrase makes no mention of financial inducement, and might well be an ironic comment on the paucity of converts on either side.

In 1240, a Jew was found guilty of manslaughter, although he denied the crime. However, the king was undeterred and sentenced the Jews residing in London to a total fine of £2,000, a huge sum for the time.[42]

While this intervention by the king is significant, it should not be overlooked that England's kings of that period were to a considerable extent financially dependent on the Jews.

42 Margoliouth: *History*, Vol. I, p. 65. Translator's note: The German text says that several Jews were found guilty of being accomplices to the crime, but the original Margoliouth source only mentions the involvement of one person. I have therefore amended the text to be true to the source that Aldag has cited (Margoliouth himself not having given his source). However, if this 1240 judgement refers to the same homicide as that which reportedly took place in London in 1239 by 'a clan of Jews', and which caused a huge uproar among the common people [see Translator's Appendix II], it would appear that this may have been a premeditated murder (as opposed to an accidental killing, which Margoliouth's term 'manslaughter' implies), and a group enterprise, which is reflected in Aldag's text.

Ritual Murder

The sources inform us of the following incident from the year 1144:[43] William, a twelve-year-old skinner's apprentice and son of the widow Elviva from Norwich, was abducted by the Jews (or, by other accounts, bought by the Jews) to be sacrificed in a mockery of the Christian feast of Easter. He was martyred and crucified like Jesus Christ. After the ritual was complete, the boy's tortured body was taken down from the wooden cross-beams which had served as a cross, and put in a sack. At daybreak, two of the Jews secretly set off for the forest on horseback, with the sack being held across the saddle bow of one of the horses.[44] On the outskirts of the forest they crossed paths with a prominent burgess of the city called Aelward Ded, who was on his way to St Leonard's church after visiting St Mary Magdalen church near the wood, and who recognised one of the Jews as the wealthy Eleazar. Knowing that it was strange to see Jews 'so far from home on a day when it was not the custom of the Jews to leave their house', Aelward asked the Jews where they were going, and as he did so he laid his hand on the sack and perceived the nature of the gruesome burden within. The Jews, terrified, galloped off into the depths of the wood, then hung the body from one of the trees in a thicket. After returning to the city, they immediately rushed to John de Caineto, the sheriff, to whom they promised one hundred silver marks if he would protect them from the impending discovery of the murder. Luckily for them, the sheriff's protection was for sale. He sent for Aelward Ded and forced him to swear an oath of secrecy about what had happened. Out of fear of the sheriff, Aelward remained silent for another five years until, immediately before the Englishman's death, the boy appeared to him in spirit and asked him to confess everything because he was no longer bound by his oath [perhaps because the sheriff had died three years earlier]. The burgess did as he was told, giving a deathbed confession to the monk Wicheman and an unnamed priest of St Nicholas, and it was from these two religious men that the monk-chronicler Thomas of Monmouth heard the story [the doctrine of the Seal of Confession not being made canon law until the next century].

In the meantime, a great commotion arose in the city after news spread about the body since discovered in the wood, which, despite being fully clothed, had been observed to exhibit a series of unusual stigmata-like wounds, a shaven head which was lacerated with thorn marks, and a wooden gag in its mouth. This, along with the fact that William had last been seen, by report of his cousin, going into a Jew's house on the Tuesday before Easter, led the populace to suspect the Jews. The sheriff tried to protect the Jews, but was powerless against the people's anger, and while a large number of Jews were killed, the rest fled. [Translator's note: Thomas of Monmouth states that, fearing a clamour of the people, and facing demands for justice from Bishop Everard and the priest Godwin, not least given that the latter was William's uncle, the sheriff had the Jews moved into the castle for protection, where they remained safe until King Stephen issued an edict for their safety and the fuss from the people and the church died down. However, Thomas (Jessopp, p. 97) also states that the infamy of the charge caused many of the Jews to disperse to other parts, while those who remained eventually 'perished by visitation of sudden death, or were put an end to by the hands

43 Jacobs, *The Jews of Angevin England*, p. 19 ff.; *Chronica Jocelini de Brakelonda*, p. 114.

44 Rigg, p. XIV; Abrahams, p. 10; Hyamson, p. 20; Margoliouth: *History,* Vol. I, p. 65; Rye, p. 138 ff.; Prynne, p. 6; Brompton, col. 1048; Foxe, Vol. I, p. 302; Holinshed, Vol. III, p. 56. Translator's note: Note that it was the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle [Whitelock, p. 200] which alleged that William had been bought by the Jews, which is likely to have been the original source for this allegation. Thomas of Monmouth, the monk who wrote William's *Life* [see Jessopp and James] states that the child was abducted by a combination of deception and bribery.

of the Christians'.] Subsequently, the spot of William's burial place was found in Thorpe Wood, and the boy's body removed to the Monks' Cemetery, before he was eventually canonised by the local clergy.[45]

Many writers have doubted the truth of this story. Jacobs[46] thinks it was invented by the church, because the child's canonisation would have ensured the pilgrimage of many English people to Norwich every year, which would have brought the church a large income. However, he is unable to provide any evidence for his claim. Other authors[47] say that the story was one that was only told to a simple populace, while it is often referred to as nothing but a legend.[48] Be that as it may, old sources report this story perfectly, and other historical facts also seem to confirm the accusations made against the Jews in this respect. In mainland Europe the Jews were also accused of similar acts, just as there was no lack of other related infamies in England. Other such murders were reported at Gloucester in 1168,[49] at Bury St. Edmunds in 1181,[50] at Winchester in 1191[51] and 1232,[52] at London in 1244[53] and at Lincoln in 1255.[54] The discoveries of the murders sparked great uproar in the cities concerned, and the Jews suffered greatly from the anger of the populace.

45 Hyamson: *History,* p. 20. Translator's note: Additional details have been added from Jessopp and James for reader convenience. See also Translator's Appendices for further information. Note that the sheriff's family name is alternatively rendered 'de Querceto' (then later, de Caisnei/Chesney/Cheney) in official records. [Jessopp and James, p. xxxiii; Rubin, p. 211, note 43]. It appears providential that the evidence points to the fact that the only surviving copy of William's *Life*, which was re-discovered in the late 19th century after some 350 years of absence from the record, had been copied in the Cistercian monastery in Sibton, Suffolk, a monastery was founded by Sheriff John's brother in 1850. Brother Thomas wrote that, after siding with the Jews and taking their bribe, Sheriff John fell soon gravely ill, and his health continued to decline until his death two years later. The parson Augustus Jessopp's description of the sheriff's fate as 'Divine Vengeance' may be infused with fin-de-siècle sardony ('St. William of Norwich', p. 756), but tradition does have it that Sheriff John vowed on his deathbed to arrange for the Cistercian abbey to be founded, to expiate 'the many ill deeds he committed while acting as sheriff, both in times of peace and times of war' (Rubin, p. lvi). If this is indeed true, then it is indirectly due to this sheriff's contrition that the full story of William of Norwich, as well as details of his own corrupt role in the event, is available to us today, almost 900 years later.

46 Jacobs, *The Jews of Angevin England*, p. 21.

47 Rigg, p. XIV; Abrahams, p. 10.

48 Hyamson: *History,* p. 20 ff.

49 *Historia et Cartularium*, Vol. I, p. 20; Foxe, Vol. I, p. 302, col. II.

50 *Chronica Jocelini de Brakelonda* pp. 12, 113-4.

51 *Annales Monastici*, Vol. IV, p. 24.

52 *Annales Monastici*, Vol. II, p. 86.

53 Matthaei Parisiensis Vol. IV, p. 377.

54 *Annales Monastici*, Vol. I, p. 340; Foxe, Vol. I, p. 423, col. II. Translator's note: This martyr is known as 'Little Saint Hugh of Lincoln' in the historical sources. For a full list of the extant ritual murder allegations in England up until 1290, see Translator's Appendix II.

Privileges Incur Resentment

Although the Jews still enjoyed the full protection of Henry II (1154-1189) he would still at times use force to make them pay special taxes, known as tallages.[55] In 1168 the Jews were ordered to raise 5,000 marks for the king, which a large part refused to pay until they saw that the king was serious enough in his demand to banish some of the rich Jews.[56] As early as 1188 they had to pay the enormous sum of £60,000 to the king as a tallage.[57]

Since money will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, a comparison between the value of money then and now may be of interest. Jacobs made very long and detailed observations with reference to various experts and came to the conclusion that the values of that time are approximately thirty times as high today.[58] He himself admitted to being not entirely sure, as was evidenced by the fact that he multiplied by fifty on at least one occasion.[59]

Despite the aforementioned tax levies, the Jews not only continued to enjoy the king's protection, but he even granted them special legal privileges.

They were placed solely under the jurisdiction of the king and his judges and not, as the English in many cases were, under that of their respective feudal lord. In legal disputes between Jews, they were entitled to their own judges, they were allowed to take their oath on the Torah, and only Jewish law (not English law) was applied.[60]

In cases between Christians and Jews, the hearings took place before mixed courts made up of an equal number of Jews and Englishmen.[61] Furthermore, the Jews had the crucial advantage over the English, namely: ‘A Jew’s oath was considered valid against the oaths of twelve Christians.’[62] This different treatment and weighting of the oath is completely incomprehensible and can probably only be explained by the fact that the king gave considerable preference to the Jews in order to benefit financially from their usurious transactions.

In addition, the Jew was advantaged in that in financial matters he only had to prove that the loan had been disbursed, while the defendant Christian had the full burden of proof for all questions that arose. The cases decided in favour of the Jews made the people ever more bitter, and resentment continued to grow in the population. The clergy also petitioned the king and complained about the Jews enjoying such privileges.[63]

In 1177, the king gave the Jews further favour by allowing them to bury their dead in various places in England, which up until that time had only applied to London. The historian Prynne expressed his surprise that this required the king's special permission. But as he observed:

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55 *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen*, Vol. I, p. 280.
56 *Gervase of Canterbury*, Vol. I, p. 205.
57 *Gervase of Canterbury*, Vol. I, p. 422; *Radulphi de Diceto*, Vol. II, p. 4. Tovery, p. 14.
58 Jacobs, *The Jews of Angevin England*, p. 316 ff. Translator’s note: Modern readers may find useful the National Archive’s online currency converter, with the understanding that the earliest date of the converter is 1270. https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result
59 Jacobs, ibid., p. 44.
60 Henriques: *The Jews*, p. 54.
61 Belloc, p. 218.
62 Hyamson: *History*, pp. 9, 27; Rigg, p. XII. Translator’s note: Quotation reproduced verbatim from original source [Hyamson, p. 9]. Translator’s note: The resentment this caused among the gentiles of the courtroom can be seen in the fact that, in certain instances, gentile clerks drew ‘grotesque caricatures of the Jews before them in the courtroom’ in the margins of the court records [e.g. Bartlet, pp. 9, 71 – see Translator’s Bibliography.].
63 *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*, Vol. IV, p. 148.

> It seems the Jews were then so odious to the whole Nation, that they would not permit them to bury their very dead corps in any *English* soyl, for fear of polluting it, nor near any Christians bodies, without the Kings special License.[64]

But the Jews did not care about the hatred emanating from the population. As long as they were under the king's protection, they could still successfully pursue their business of usury.

64 Prynne, p. 7. Translator’s note: Quotation reproduced verbatim from original source.

Aaron of Lincoln

The wealth of the Jews reached enormous proportions, especially under the reign of Henry II. The richest and most famous Jew of that period was Aaron of Lincoln (1125-1186).[65]

Nothing is known of his early life. We only hear about him in his last twenty years on earth.[66] He is worth discussing in some detail because from his business deals it can be shown how, even back then, a single Jew controlled a significant part of the entire monetary economy of England.

Numerous Cistercian monasteries, such as those of Rievaulx, New Minster, Kirkstead, Rufford, and Kirkstall were built with his money, as can be seen indirectly from a contemporary chronicle.[67] Thereafter, the aforementioned abbeys, along with others, owed Aaron large sums of money, which must have been a significant part of the construction costs of the monasteries. After Aaron's death, this debt was escheated to the king, who forgave the abbeys a substantial part of it. The debt was probably forgiven in view of the fact that a large part of the overall claim consisted of accrued loan interest. In addition, the cathedrals of St. Albans, Lincoln and Peterborough were built with Aaron's money,[68] and we find him further mentioned in connection with the announcement that church property mortgaged to him had been redeemed.[69]

But the church not only played the role of borrower; it was also not averse to doing business with Aaron, about which a particularly revealing case has come down to us.

A certain William Fossard, near the monastery of Meaux, was in debt to the Jews for an amount totalling £1,200. For this sum he had pledged part of his property to them. Aaron bought this debt claim and was willing to forego almost a third of the entire debt if the abbot of the monastery in question took over the payment. William was not averse to this change of creditor, especially since his debts had increased to such an extent as a result of the huge interest that he was never able to pay it off. The trade was apparently quite favourable for the monastery, because in addition to the land, it also received two villages located there. This is how the deal came about; the monastery paid the debt, including interest, to Aaron, but William had lost his land.[70]

The existing document relating to this transaction shows that Aaron had bought up numerous claims against William from other Jews. As a result, his willingness to give up a third of the amount becomes clear. It is most likely that he bought the original claims totalling £1,200 from William’s various creditors for far less than their book value, so that even with the aforementioned discount he would still have made a good deal.

Aaron had branches or agents in all parts of the country.[71] A significant number of Jews were in his service as agents and most appear to have had business relationships with him.[72]

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65 Hyamson: *History*, p. 23 ff.
66 Jacobs: *Aaron of Lincoln,* p. 157.
67 *Memorials of the Abbey of St. Mary of Fountains*, Vol. II, p. 18, n 4. Translator’s note: The following are the other Cistercian monasteries listed as having been indebted to Aaron, prior to King Richard I remitting their debts: Biddlesden Abbey, Revesby Abbey, Roche Abbey and Louth Park Abbey. Note that the reproduced Latin charter has all of the Cistercian debt forgiven, more than the ‘substantial part’ (*beträchtlichen Teil*) of Aldag’s text.
68 Hyamson: *History*, p. 23 ff.
69 *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, Vol. VII. p. 36.
70 We find something similar reported in *Chronica Monasterii de Melsa,* Vol I, p. 306, 315. Translator’s note: The source for this tale appears to be Jacobs: *Aaron of Lincoln*, pp. 163-4, which gives more particulars of the case.
71 Hyamson: *History*, p. 23.
72 Jacobs: *Aaron of Lincoln*, pp. 166-7.

Among his many debtors were leading men of the time, including the Earls of Leicester and Chester, the Bishops of Bangor and Lincoln, and even the Archbishop of Canterbury.[73] There is a careful list of Aaron's debtors and their debts compiled from old documents. The result is astonishing, and best shows Aaron's huge influence.[74] The size of his fortune is also indicated the fact that when he died in 1186, a special department was set up in the royal treasury to manage his estate.[75]

Even as early as this period we have an example of the way in which Jewish money was involved and interested in military matters. In 1170, a powerful liegeman of Henry II, Richard de Clare, raised an army and sailed to Ireland to conquer the Kingdom of Leinster without the king's knowledge or consent. According to some historians,[76] the king was outraged because he viewed this conquest as the arbitrary act of a vassal. As a result, he imposed heavy fines on the Jews who, according to the reports he had received, had financed the military expedition. It was not possible to establish the facts underpinning this traditional history.

73 Jacobs: *Aaron of Lincoln*, p. 169.

74 Jacobs: *Aaron of Lincoln*, p. 174 ff. [Appendix of Aaron's debts compiled by the Rev. S. Levy.] Translator's note: It must be borne in mind that this list of debtors and debts was compiled for the period corresponding to sixteen years after Aaron's death, that is to say, these are the debtors and debts that still remained outstanding after Aaron's business had formally ended sixteen years before. If a similar list could be compiled for the latter years of Aaron's life, we can only speculate as to how much bigger it would be.

75 Jacobs: *Aaron of Lincoln*, p. 168.

76 Hyamson: *History*, p. 26.

People and Church in the Hands of the Usurers

We see the wealth of the Jews increasing and, as a result, their influence growing. This was offset by the poverty of the people, who could only helplessly stand by as they were exploited.

It is not easy to get an idea of how much the debt had already grown by this time, so the best way to get a sense of the problem is by citing a few incidents.

The king's subjects were required to pay taxes and other state duties largely in cash. The money in circulation was still not very great, so the people usually had to turn to the Jews for such payments, who would give only too willingly. From one account we can see how a certain Richard of Anesty quickly fell into debt. Richard had borrowed the sum of £91.6s.8d and had to pay a usurious 60% interest rate on the loan. It need hardly be said that he was ruined in a very short time.

But it was not only the private individual who appears to have suffered from the usury of the Jews; the church was also particularly dependent on the Hebrews.

When a natural son of King Henry II was appointed to succeed the Bishop of Lincoln in 1173, one of his first official acts was to 'redeem the ornaments of his church, which his predecessor had pledged to Aaron the Jew'.[77]

Another case sheds an even starker light on the conditions of the period. In 1175, Richard, Archbishop of Canterbury went to Peterborough Abbey to depose the local abbot, William of Walterville, because he had entered the monastery with the help of soldiers against the will of the monks and by force of arms had seized the bones of the saints that he had pledged to the Jews for money.[78] What must have been the state of popular morale when even the highest dignitaries of the church committed such acts!

Around 1180, St. Edmunds Abbey [of the town of St. Edmunds, now Bury St. Edmunds] sank into a deplorable state. The woodlands were destroyed and the buildings had fallen into disrepair. There was therefore only one way out for the 'good and devout' Abbot Hugh: to borrow more money from the Jews. He had not been able to pay the interest for a long time. When the debt fell due, the sum of the accrued interest was added to the capital and a new debt bond was drawn up. This repeated itself with each due date and the debt grew ever larger: 'In the last eight years of [the abbot's] life, sums of £100 or £200 were regularly added to the debt every Easter and Michaelmas.'

The individual monks who were abbey officials also believed that they could claim the same right for themselves as their abbot had for the abbey, and so it was not uncommon for them to borrow money from the Jews for personal purposes. Without the abbot's consent, they pledged 'silken copes, golden vessels and other church ornaments'. The chronicler Jocelin of Brakelond recounts how he saw one debt bond for £1,040, in favour of William fitz Isabel [an important Christian financier], and another bond for £400, this time in favour of 'Isaac son of Rabbi Joce', without being able to fathom the circumstances that had led to the issuance of either document. Then he saw a third debt bond for £880, in favour of 'Benedict the Jew of Norwich', which had arisen for the following reason:

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77 *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, Vol. VII, p. 36.

78 *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi*, Vol. I, p. 106. Translator's note: Readers may be interested to know that among the saintly relics stolen was the arm of Saint Oswald, the 7th-century Northumbrian king famed for converting his kingdom to Christianity. The source also states that the abbot and his armed mercenaries inflicted mortal wounds on the monks and ministers of the church as these holy men tried to defend their relics.

> Our treasury building was in a dilapidated condition, and William the sacrist was determined to restore it, come what may. He secretly borrowed 40 marks at interest from Benedict the Jew… When the sum owed had risen to £100, the Jew arrived with a letter from the king concerning the sacrist's debt, and in this way the secret was revealed to the abbot and convent. The abbot was furious, and would have deposed the sacrist, claiming that he had authority from the pope to dismiss him when he wished. But someone went to the abbot, and speaking on the sacrist's behalf, so deceived him that he allowed another bond to be made out for Benedict the Jew, this time for £400 to be paid at the end of four years. This was for the £100 already accumulated at interest and another £100 which the Jew lent the sacrist for the abbot's use…
>
> Four years later, when the obligation could not be met, a new bond was issued, for £880 to be paid off at fixed terms, at £80 per annum. The same Jew held several other bonds for smaller debts and one that was for fourteen years, so that altogether he was owed £1,200, excluding the compound interest.

The monk Jocelin also reports that the cellarer was also heavily indebted to the Jews:

> At that time the cellarer, like the other officials, borrowed money from Jurnet the Jew, without consulting the convent, in a bond sealed with the seal I mentioned previously [the conventual seal]. But when the debt had grown to £60, the convent was summoned to pay the cellarer's debt. He was deposed, although he alleged that on the abbot's orders he had for the last three years entertained in the guest-house, whether the abbot was at home or not, all those guests who, according to abbey custom, ought to have been entertained by the abbot himself. Master Denis replaced him, and by careful management brought the debt of £60 down to £30… But still to this day the Jew retains a bond for £26 capital and the cellarer's debt.[79]

When the tormented abbot Hugh finally closed his eyes forever in 1180, William the sacrist had hopes for his position. The subsacrist Samson also applied with him, but he was not acceptable to many others, both Christians and Jews. The chronicler seems to understand the need to explain to a future readership why a candidate for monastery abbot would require Jewish political support:

> I should explain that the sacrist was referred to as the father and patron of the Jews, for they enjoyed his protection. They had free entrance and exit, and went everywhere throughout the monastery, wandering by the altars and round the shrine while Mass was being celebrated. Their money was deposited in our treasury, in the sacrist's custody. Even more incongruous, during the troubles [of 1173-4], their wives and children were sheltered in our pittancery.[80]

79 *Chronica Jocelini de Brakelonda*, p. 1 ff. Translator's note: Aldag translated directly from the Latin into German. To ensure reliability, all quotations and quoted elements used in this chapter are therefore reproduced verbatim from the 1989 Oxford World Classics translation [see Translator's Bibliography]; citations here are from pp. 3-4, 6-7.

80 *Chronica Jocelini de Brakelonda*, p. 8. Translator's note: As footnote 79, quotation from p. 10. Note that the original Latin '*Quod absurdius est…*' has been diplomatically translated as 'Even more incongruous…'.

Despite having ‘enemies and opponents’ work against him, not least after he put a mechanism in place to stop the embezzlement of church funds (which others were doing, and which he himself was falsely accused of), Samson was elected abbot. His first official act was to depose William as sacristan, but William did not want to accept this and, in 1182, together with other dissatisfied monks, forged a plot against Samson. When Abbot Samson found out about this:

> …he resolved neither to remain completely silent nor to upset the convent, so when he came into chapter the next day he produced a bag full of cancelled charters [debt bonds], still bearing their seals, some in his predecessor’s name, some in the prior’s, some in the sacrist’s, some the chamberlain’s, and some in the names of other officials. The total of the capital involved was £3,052 and 1 mark, without the accumulated interest, whose real magnitude could never be known. He had come to terms over all these debts within a year of his election, and he had paid them all off inside twelve years. ‘Take a look at the wise policies of your sacrist William!’ he said. ‘Just see how many charters have been sealed by him without the convent’s consent, pledging silk copes, dalmatics, silver thuribles, and volumes bound in gold, all of which I have repurchased and restored to you.’ He went on to give further justification of his deposition of William, although he did not reveal the principle reason as he did not wish to ‘cause him to stumble’ (Mal. 2:8). Then he appointed Samson the precentor to be sacrist in William’s place, and thus everything was resolved peacefully, since Samson was superior in every way and was acceptable to us all. The abbot even ordered the sacrist’s house in the cemetery to be completely demolished, as if it were not fit to stand upon the earth, on account of the frequent drinking sessions and other unmentionable activities of which he had been made painfully aware as subsacrist. Within a year he had it all razed to the ground: where a fine building had stood we saw beans pushing up their stems, and where wine barrels had been stored there grew a bed of nettles.[81]

These ancient chronicles are interesting not only because they show the general indebtedness to the Jews, but also because they teach us how their influence, with the help of their money, even penetrated the cloister.

Yes, the Jews even interfered in the affairs of the monastery, despite these places being completely alien to them. As we have seen, they found the choice of Samson unacceptable because he did not make common cause with them. And finally, this chronicle shows us the arrogance of the Jews: they dared to roam around the altar and St. Edmunds shrine during the solemnities of the Mass. It is no surprise then that as this Caesar worked to root out corruption and put the monastic house in order, morally and financially, with a confiscation of the monastery’s seals to prevent unauthorised borrowing that led to 33 seals being collected in total [p. 35], there was what appears to be an attempt on his life:

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81 *Chronica Jocelini de Brakelonda*, p. 22. Translator’s note: Quotation reproduced from pp. 28-9 of the Oxford World Classics translation. It may interest readers to know that the upright Samson did not only succeed in routing out the corruption emanating from William’s office – he also had the Jews expelled from the town of St. Edmunds in 1190 [pp. 41-2 in the Oxford text].

> One night, when he was staying at Warkton [Northants], he heard a voice speaking to him in his sleep, 'Samson, get up quickly', and then, 'Get up, you are too slow.' Astonished, he got up and looked around, and saw a light in the lavatory. It was a candle that was just about to fall on to some straw, carelessly left there by the monk Reiner. After he had snuffed out the candle, he went round the house and found the only door fastened in such a way that it could not be opened without a key and the windows tightly closed, so that if the fire had flared up, that would have been the end of him and all the people sleeping in that room, because there was no exit or escape route. [p. 29]

Meanwhile, the following anecdote from St. Albans monastery paints another frightening tableau of the times:

> But because no man on earth, not even a day-old infant, is without blemish, let us only briefly touch on the errors of this man [the abbot of St. Albans], for they are few in number compared to his good deeds. When he died, he left his abbey in debt of more than six hundred marks, which he owed to the Jews. This basic amount was burdened by an additional two hundred marks in debt interest. Hence Aaron the Jew, who kept us bound to him, appeared in St. Alban's House with great pride and boasting, as well as with threats, and used to brag that he had made the bier [i.e. the shrine] for our blessed Alban, and that he himself, out of hospitality, had housed the saint with his own money.
>
> [*Sed quia non vivit homo super terram, nec etiam infans unius diei, sine offendiculo, errores ipsius, quia respectu bonorum operum suorum breves, breviter transcurramus. Moriens, Abbathiam suam aere alieno obligatam plusquam secentis marcis contra Judaeos, sine aliis debitis, quae ad ducentarum marcarum et amplius summan excreverunt dereliquit. Unde Aaron Judaeus, qui nos tenuit sibi obligatos, ad Domum Sancti Albani, in superbia magna et jactantia, cum minis, veniens, jactitabat se feretrum Beato Albano nostro fecisse, et ipsi, dehospitato, hospitium de pecunia sua praeparasse.*].[82]

When Henry II died in 1189, the Jews not only expected his successor Richard, known as the Lionheart, to maintain the existing situation, but they even hoped for improvements. When commenting on this, the historian Moses Margoliouth then strangely goes on to say: 'They were encouraged in their hopes by Richard's conduct, when, after returning from Normandy, he proclaimed liberty to all prisoners and captives, even to the greatest criminals.'[83]

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82 *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani*, Vol. I, pp. 193-4. Translator's note: I have reproduced the Latin original alongside this English translation for transparency, not only because the text is open to interpretation, but also because readers familiar with Joseph Jacobs' widely disseminated translation may wonder why the English version above does not feature a window (presumably due to a confusion between *fenestram* and *feretrum*). In one of his 'Provincial Letters', the Rev. Henry Beeching, later Dean of Norwich, was scathing about this abbey incident, which he reproduced in Latin before explaining to readers: 'He [Aaron] is said in the St. Alban's Chronicle to have ridden up to the gates of that Abbey, which was deep in his debt, and to have boasted with threats that the shrine of the Blessed Alban was built with his money and belonged to him. Probably the threat was to take the shrine away unless his interest was more punctually paid.' From *The Cornhill Magazine*, July 1901, (Vol. 11, No. 61), pp. 120-1.

83 Margoliouth: *History*, Vol. I, p. 83. Translator's note: Quotation reproduced verbatim from original source.

Popular Anger Breaks Out

On September 3rd, 1189, Richard the Lionheart was crowned King of England,[84] a day that was extremely important for the history of the Jews in ancient England. From that point on they lost power and wealth until they were finally forced to leave the country. Subjects had flocked to London from all parts of the Angevin Empire, including from the then English possessions in France. The Jews had also sent their leaders to this event. For whatever reason – some say superstition,[85] others antipathy towards the Jews[86] – the king, at the instigation of Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury, passed a law prohibiting Jews from entering Westminster Abbey or his palace during the coronation,[87] and they were forbidden on pain of death to enter during the banquet. This order was publicly announced on the same day[88] by heralds proclaiming it in the streets and posting notices of it in prominent places so that everyone in the city knew about it in good time. A large crowd had gathered near the church and the palace, including numerous Jews. These Jews carried expensive gifts for the king and, despite the ban, were desirous to present them to him that same day in homage. It is not entirely clear whether they had only got as far as the gates of the palace[89] or had already reached the king[90] when the 'foreigners',[91] or what other call 'the mob',[92] pounced on them. In any case, the crowd was outraged at the presumption of the Jews to disregard the king's decree. Margoliouth laments this outrage, the fact that 'the most loyal subjects, the most patriotic Englishmen, and the oldest settlers in the realm' had been driven back by brute force; for they could not have known anything about the decree that had been proclaimed just the day before.[93] That this was not the majority view is evidenced by the behaviour of the crowd, who themselves knew about the ban and were therefore upset by the behaviour of the Jews. Threatening fists were brandished and soon blows began to rain down. The crowd became more and more agitated and finally attacked the Jews with sticks. Spectators standing at a greater distance saw and heard the commotion, believing that the king himself had ordered the Jews' expulsion because they had violated his ban. By the time the Jews tried to escape, most of them had already been killed.[94] False news spread like wildfire that the king himself had ordered the massacre. The population had been waiting for a long time for the king to give them a free hand, and now what had to come after all of the abuses finally happened: the people armed themselves and killed every Jew in sight unless

84 *Grafton's Chronicle*, Vol. I, p. 219 ff.

85 *Chronicles of the Reign of Stephen*, Vol. 1. pp. 294-5; Margoliouth: *History*, Vol. 1, p. 86. Translator's note: The Jews were strongly associated with sorcery in the Middle Ages. To quote Margoliouth: 'The courtiers and the clergy – especially Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury – endeavoured to make the king believe that the Jews were, in general, sorcerers, and might possibly bewitch him if they are allowed to be present at his coronation.' This association is also seen in the *Vita* of Christina of Markyate (?c. 1130s) in which, after the love potions of the local cunning woman failed, 'a Jewess was hired to bend Christina's will with spells more powerful than the others' [Furlong, p. 54, in Translator's Bibliography], while the 1240 Synod of Worcester decreed that Christians who consulted Jews for the purposes of magic should be brought before the bishop for punishment [Trachtenberg: *The Devil…*, p. 68]. Note that women were also banned from the event for the same reason [Margoliouth, p. 87].

86 Rye, p. 8.

87 'B. B.', p. 6.

88 W. H.: *Anglo-Judaeus*, p. 9.

89 *Chronicles of the Reign of Stephen*, Vol. I, p. 294 ff.

90 *The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, Vol. II, p. 690 ff.

91 *Radulfi de Diceto*, Vol. II, p. 69.

92 *Rogeri de Houedene*, Vol. III, p. 12.

93 Margoliouth: *Anglo-Hebrews*, p. 12. Translator's note: Quotation reproduced verbatim from original source.

94 *Radulphi de Coggeshall*, pp. 26-28; *Matthaei Parisiensis* [Matthew Paris], *Chronica Majora*, Vol. II, p. 350. Translator's note: All future references to this famous work will be simply as *Chronica Majora*.

he allowed himself to be baptised.[95] Among those baptised was one of York's leading Jews, Benedict of York. When he was brought before the king a short time later, he again described himself as a Jew. He was allowed to live out of contempt for his fickleness and cowardice. The rioting in London continued into the day after the coronation. The king's attempts to suppress the riots were in vain given the anger of the people. The Jews withdrew into their fortified houses, which the English tried repeatedly to break into without success. Fires were then thrown onto the roofs, and the Jews burned to death in their homes. In some cases the fire spread to English buildings nearby, and the tumult in London was indescribable.[96]

William of Newburgh, the late 12th-century chronicler, sees this outbreak of popular anger as the will of God, for the punishment of the haughty and wicked Jews had been bound to come.[97]

Another chronicler of the same period, Richard of Devizes, a monk at St. Swithun's Priory in Winchester, explains why his city of residence did not take part in the anti-Jewish riots, and shares William's somewhat uncharitable view of Jews as a group:

> On the very day of the coronation, about that solemn hour in which the Son was immolated to the Father, a sacrifice of the Jews to their father the devil was commenced in the city of London, and so long was the duration of this famous mystery, that the holocaust could scarcely be accomplished the ensuing day. The other cities and towns of the kingdom emulated the faith of the Londoners, and with a like devotion despatched their blood-suckers with blood to hell. In this commotion there was prepared, although unequally, some evil against the wicked everywhere throughout the realm, only Winchester alone, the people being prudent and circumspect, and the city always acting mildly, spared its vermin. It never did anything over-speedily; fearing nothing more than to repent, it considers the result of every thing before the commencement. It was unwilling, unprepared, to cast up violently through the parts the indigestion by which it was oppressed to its bodily peril, and it was careful for its bowels, in the mean time temperately concealing its uneasiness, until it should be possible for it, at a convenient time for cure, to cast out the whole cause of the disease at once and once for all.

Although the king was very angry about the rioting, as it had happened on his coronation day, he did very little against the people in relation to the incident. He had only three people involved in the tumult hanged: 'the one, for that he had robbed a Christians house in this tummult, and the other two for that they fired the houses, to the great danger of the citie.'[98]

A wave of anti-Jewish persecution swept throughout England.[99] The people gave free rein to their long-held feelings. Wherever Jews were found and could be caught, they were killed. Many saved themselves and their valuable possessions by seeking refuge in the royal castles, which was largely granted to them by the king's officials. Particularly involved in the unrest were warriors who

95 *Chronicles and Memorials of the Reign of Richard I*, Vol. I, p. 142.
96 *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi*, Vol. II, p. 84; *Matthæi Pariensis, Historia Anglorum*, Vol. II. p. 9.
97 *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen*…, Vol. I, p. 296. Translator's note: The subsequent commentary from Richard of Devizes has been added by myself for reader interest, the quotation being reproduced verbatim from the 1841 translation by Giles (pp. 5-6) [See Translator's Bibliography].
98 *Rogeri de Houdene*, Vol. III. p. 12; Foxe, Vol. I, pp. 304-305. Translator's note: Quotation reproduced verbatim from Foxe [p. 305].
99 *Annales Monastici*, Vol. IV, p. 42

had followed Richard the Lionheart's call to go to Palestine. In Norwich,[100] Lincoln,[101] Stamford[102] and St. Edmunds [now Bury St Edmunds][103] the persecution was particularly severe and many Jews were killed.

The reason for the 1190 persecution of Jews in King's Lynn is interesting. There a Jew had converted to Christianity, which enraged his Jewish brethren. When one day they came across the baptised Jew in the street, they tried to kill him, but he found refuge in a nearby church. The Jews did not stop pursuing him, but literally besieged the church and even tried to force open the church doors that had been closed by the refugee. Other Christians in the church, frightened, shouted on their fellow Christians outside for help, who came running to their aid and tried to drive away the frenzied Jews. However, the Jews did not give up and in the violence that broke out, many Jews were killed. The fleeing Jews were then pursued, their houses looted and burned down. The next day a distinguished Jewish doctor, well known in King's Lynn, insulted the people and prophesied vengeance. This incited the still furious population, who seized him and killed him.[104]

The persecutions were probably most intense in the north of England, but especially in York. Here the usury was worse than anywhere else, and nowhere were there more rich Jews than in that city. Their houses resembled palaces and their standard of living was royal for the time. And all of this was at the expense of the population. In no other place was there greater misery. The lowly people, the clergy and the nobility suffered equally. Anyone who had once borrowed money was hopelessly at the mercy of the Jews because of the enormous interest. Various noblemen had already lost all of their property. Embittered, these peers gathered the equally dissatisfied common people to their side and waited for the day of reckoning.[105] Crusading warriors passing through the city did the same, and one night, at the beginning of March 1190, an agitated mob stormed the house of one of the richest Jews – the aforementioned Benedict. Anyone found alive was beaten to death, while the house was looted and then set on fire. Most of the Jews of York reached the castle under cover of darkness, where the royal commander gave them refuge. When one day he left the castle for a short time, on his return the Jews refused to let him back in. They had now made themselves masters of the castle. The commander summoned royal troops and, together with the angry citizens, stormed the castle. After the besieged Jews realised that their situation was hopeless, some of them killed themselves, while the rest surrendered, but were killed anyway by the embittered people.

Immediately afterwards, the mob rushed to the cathedral [York Minster], where their debt bonds were kept. These debt bonds were seized and burned, an act which greatly angered the king, given that the Jews' debtors were now obligated to make their payments to him, by law their new creditor on the death of their Jewish usurer.[106] With these debt bonds being the only proof of the debt to be recovered, the king had nothing in his hands to determine the deceased Jews' assets. He therefore sent a punitive expedition to York, but most of the rebels had already fled to Scotland.[107] Of those who remained and had taken part in the trouble, 51 were sentenced to a total fine of £228.[108]

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100 *Radulphi de Diceto*, Vol. II, p. 75; *Rogeri de Wendover*, Vol. I, p. 176; *Chronica Jocelini de Brakelonda*, p. 33.
101 *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen…*, Vol. I, p. 312.
102 *Radulphi de Diceto*, Vol. II, p. 75; *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen…*, Vol. I, p. 310.
103 *Radulphi de Diceto*, Vol. II, p. 76.
104 *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen…*, Vol. I, p. 308.
105 *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen…*, Vol. I, p. 313.
106 *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen…*, Vol. I, p. 323.
107 *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen…*, Vol. I, p. 312 ff.; *Radulphi de Diceto*, Vol. II, pp.75-6.
108 *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen…*, Vol. I, p. 324.

The never-ending series of riots, with the ensuing loss of debt bonds, apparently caused King Richard to pass a law to protect the Jews. The loss of these documents affected him personally, as the Jews' taxes to him were based on the assessed total of their wealth. The events in York probably accelerated the promulgation of the law, which took place at the end of March 1190. The Jews were then assured that they had the right to live in England. In addition, their assets were guaranteed, and it was also expressly confirmed that they could sell the items pledged to them after one year and one day. Finally, the law instituted the drastic measure, which had already been in practice previously and had caused endless bitterness among the population: ‘that all Jews in England and Normandy should be free from Customs duties and taxes.’ The statute ended on another solemn promise to protect all Jews.[109]

As is well known, Richard went off on Crusade in 1190 and did not return to England until 1194. His preparations for the Crusade had left him no time to adequately deal with the issues arising out of the Jewish Question.

109 *Rymer’s Fœdera*, Vol. I, p. 51. Translator’s note: I was unable to find the information at the reference given, nor at the source pages which corresponded to the year 1190.

Legal Status of the Jews

After his return from the Holy Land, Richard sent officials to the various cities where the persecution of Jews had taken place. He wanted to get an accurate picture of the number of Jews killed in order to determine the extent of their legacy.[110] The investigations in York proved impracticable because a significant part of the Jews' wealth consisted of claims against Englishmen whose debt records had been burned by an embittered populace during the riots. This demonstrated to Richard that he had to take measures to avoid similar incidents, because he considered the Jews (and by extension their property) to be his property. Furthermore, according to the legal opinion of the time, he believed that Jews did not live for themselves but for others, and thus acquired material goods for those others.[111]

Abrahams concludes from this that the Jews were only serfs in their relationship to the king.[112] A similar position is also taken by Rigg,[113] Stokes[114] and the writing duo Pollock and Maitland.[115] However, Picciotto is of the opinion that this view of history must be rejected. He concludes this because, in his view, the Jews were entitled under the law to be property owners.[116] However, given that this idea was very controversial right up until the first half of the 19th century, this Jewish writer's view is unlikely to have been the case [and may be an attempt to retcon history]. We too are of the opinion that the Jews were probably to be viewed as the king's serfs. When a Jew died, by law the deceased's estate passed to the king, who usually did not make use of his right but left the estate to the natural heirs and only levied a considerable inheritance tax. As a result, the king must always have felt at a disadvantage when he was unable to determine the exact amount of assets due to the lack of debt records. To remedy this situation, Richard had a law passed in September 1194, the year he returned to England, which contained a provision in which participation in anti-Jewish uprisings was to be punished and, additionally, all liabilities towards the Jews who had been killed had to be registered.[117]

Additionally, the section titled *Capitula Judaeorum,* which outlined the details of the new *archa* system for registering financial transactions, would have important repercussions for the future. It stipulated that from that point onwards, all claims, mortgages, houses and other assets of the Jews should be registered. Any assets that the Jews did not honestly declare, whether tangible or financial, were to be considered forfeited. The new law stipulated that six or seven urban centres in the realm [which came to be known as *archa* towns] were to be the only places where debt contracts could be drawn up. This was to be done with the assistance of four notaries (two Englishmen and two Jews), two legal registrars, and other employees. The documents were to be issued in different

110 Hyamson: *History*, p. 42.
111 *Henrici de Bracton*, p. 51. Translator's note: McCall provides a translation of this English jurist, who wrote (in Latin) at some point before 1256: 'A Jew cannot have anything of his own, because whatever he acquires, he acquires not for himself but for the king, because they do not live for themselves but for others and so they acquire for others and not for themselves.' [*The Medieval Underworld*, p. 272 – See Translator's Bibliography.]
112 Abrahams, p. 13 ff. Translator's note: This was also the view of Thomas Aquinas, who in turn took this view from St. Bernard, so it might fairly be said that this was the traditional Christian view of Jewry in the medieval polity. McCall quotes Aquinas as saying 'since the Jews are the slaves of the Church, she can dispose of their possessions' and 'the Jews are the serfs of the Christian princes'. [*Idem*, pp. 271-2]
113 Rigg, p. XIII.
114 Stokes: *Relationship*, p. 161.
115 Pollock & Maitland, Vol. I, p. 471.
116 Picciotto, p. 70 ff.
117 *Rogeri de Houedene*, Vol. III, p. 263 [item IX].

copies, one of which remained in the Jew's possession, while a second was kept safe in the state depository. The chest [*archa*, pl. *archae*] intended for this purpose had three locks, for which the two Christians, the two Jews and the officials each had a key.

The issuance of these documents would continue to be subject to a type of stamp duty. For their legal validity it was necessary that they be completed in the presence of the persons mentioned. The same applied to any changes to the debt contract, such as an increase or decrease in the amount owed, or a change in the interest rate. An exact register of the payments made was also kept. At the end of the process, the Jews were again asked by the king to truthfully declare their assets so that these could be registered accordingly, and 'to report to him all contract forgers and coin clippers, as far as they were known'.[118] If such orders proved necessary, there must have been quite a few cases of such crimes in which, as usual, Jews would be disproportionately involved.

Incidentally, this appears to be the first extant documentary evidence, in this case a legal statute, in which Jews were linked to coin crimes in medieval England. We will see below how these Jewish crimes escalated to an ever greater severity in the subsequent century and significantly contributed to the eventual expulsion of the Jewish people.

There can be no doubt that this law gradually gave rise to the so-called 'Exchequer of the Jews'. The basis for this government department was the public registration of debts and an existing department in the royal treasury that had been set up to manage Aaron of Lincoln's huge legacy. When Aaron died in 1186, King Henry II made full use of the right to confiscate his property, although the size of the estate necessitated the creation of a special treasury department.[119] The exact year that this Jewish tax office was established is not known, but it certainly did not take place before the year 1194, when the aforementioned law was passed, nor after 1198, because in this latter year we find references to 'judges of the Jews' in contemporary documents.[120]

This 'Exchequer of the Jews', otherwise known as the *Saccarium Judaeorum* or *Thesauraria Judaeorum* in the historical record,[121] had two main tasks to carry out, which were financial and judicial. On the one hand, the Exchequer as Jewish tax office handled all of the king's transactions with the Jews, e.g. the collection of a special inheritance tax, penny head tax, wealth tax and confiscations. On the other hand, the Exchequer also administered justice, not only between the king and the Jews, but also between the king and the English, as far as Jewish business was concerned. Equally as important, it also made judgments in legal disputes between the English and the Jews.[122] The entirety of the Exchequer's transactions were documented in the so-called 'Pipe Rolls' and are largely preserved today, giving a fairly accurate picture of the Jewish Exchequer's activities.[123]

The aforementioned first department of the Exchequer had to ensure that when a Jew died, his assets were determined and valued. This was not difficult after the 1194 law came into force, as there was normally reasonable documentary evidence to prove this. An inheritance tax of 33⅓ percent was generally levied on the estate.[124]

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118 *Rogeri de Houedene*, Vol. III, p. 266-7 [Item XXIV]; Twysden, p. 1258. Translator's note: To banish any reader doubt, the original Latin of the quotation, which is from *Rogeri de Houedene*, is 'retonsores denariorum', that is, 'coin clippers'.
119 Hyamson: *History*, p. 43.
120 Madox: *Formulare Anglicanum*, p. 77.
121 Gross: *Exchequer*, p. 175.
122 Pollock & Maitland, Vol. I. p. 90.
123 Rigg: *Exchequer of the Jews*, Vol. III. p. XIII.
124 Gross: *Exchequer*, p. 192; *Annales Monastici*, Vol. I, p. 340; Foxe, Vol. I, p. 423, col. II.

The so-called confiscations were a method of taxation which covered many aspects of life. Mainly they referred to taxes exacted when granting licences of all kinds. Sometimes they were claimed when Jews entered into a marriage contract, and they were also included in the costs of litigation between creditors and debtors and vice versa.

Closely related to this method of taxation was the tallage [or mulct] on those who had committed capital crimes, such as the counterfeiting or clipping of coins, with capital punishment being carried out simultaneously. The amount of this latter type of tax was often considerable.[125]

However, the most profitable taxes for the king were the so-called poll taxes. They were regularly levied whenever the king's coffers were empty – a common predicament – and in the years 1194-1290 the Jews paid enormous sums in this way. To date, it has not yet been fully established how much these taxes generated for the king as an annual average. The renowned judge Coke speaks of around £50,000 a year,[126] while Gross only wishes to consider £5,000-£10,000.[127] The total will probably be somewhere between the two; but even if one accepts Gross's estimate, it was already significant in relation to the king's other income. King Edward I, of whom we will hear more below, only had an ordinary revenue of £65,000,[128] so he had to rely largely on Jewish taxes. The poll tax was either levied on a per capita basis[129] or a specific sum was set to be paid by the entire Jewry of England. How the tax burden was distributed among its individual members was then a matter for the Jews themselves.[130] It was not uncommon for the richest Jews to be tasked with delivering the required sum, and it was up to them how they got the money together.

This type of tax collection was only possible with the help of the Exchequer of the Jews, because the king could only determine the assets of the Jews and determine the amount of the poll tax to be paid based on the registers kept there. If the Jews were unable or unwilling to pay the sum imposed on them from their current income, the king quickly confiscated their debt claims and asserted them in his own name. A debtor's payment to the Jew after such a confiscation was not recognised.[131] It was not uncommon for Jews to fail to pay the required poll taxes, resulting in all of their property being confiscated and even entire families being sent to the Tower as hostages.[132]

The Jew himself could never legally forgive a debt on his own, but required the consent of the Exchequer,[133] just as he likewise had to obtain their approval for a legally valid assertion of a claim.[134]

In the course of the 13th century, another restriction was put in place, namely that Jews could only settle in places where there were branches of the Exchequer [symbolised by the *archa*] – a regulation of drastic importance, and the greatest regulatory change since Richard the Lionheart.[135]

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125 Hyamson: *History*, p. 45; Gross: *Exchequer,* p. 193; Abrahams: *Expulsion*, p. 14. Translator's note: It may interest English-speaking readers to know that the German word used here for clipping [of coins] – *Beschneidung* – has the double meaning of circumcision. Note that there were instances where Jews were mulcted as a group for a criminal act (i.e. the fine was a form of collective punishment), regardless of whether or not the individual perpetrator(s) had been identified – as seen, for example, in the case of the apparent ritual infanticide in London, 1244.

126 Coke, p. 506.

127 Gross: *Exchequer,* p. 195.

128 Stubbs, Vol. II, p. 595 ff.

129 Madox: *Exchequer*, Vol. I, p. 257; Prynne, Vol. II, p. 32.

130 Madox: *Exchequer*, Vol. I, p. 224; Prynne, Vol. II, pp. 32, 39, 76 ff.

131 The documents from these events are still in the Record Office today. There are also numerous other documented sources, including: *Rymer's Fœdera*, Vol. I, pp. 337, p. 407; Prynne, Vol. II, pp. 51, 77, 86-7, 89, 104, 112.

132 *Chronica Majora*, Vol. V, p. 441; Madox: *Exchequer*, Vol. I, p. 230, 256; Prynne, Vol. II, p. 18. 40, 48, 75.

133 Madox: *Exchequer*, Vol. I, p. 246.

134 Prynne, Vol. II, p. 64.

135 *Rymer's Fœdera*, Vol. I, p. 634; Prynne, Vol. I, p. 39.

According to Gross's careful research,[136] there are likely to have been 26 such designated places [*archa* towns], including London, Bedford, Lincoln, Oxford, Cambridge and York. Numerous cities had by this point even requested and received the royal privilege of being freed from any Jewish settlement. These included Derby, Leicester and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, among others.[137] On the other hand, in exceptional cases, Jews were allowed to settle in cities where there was no *archa*.[138]

The aforementioned second department of the Jewish Exchequer functioned as a law court.

Legal cases between Jews were not part of its jurisdiction, because as we have already explained, in such cases the Jews were granted complete jurisdiction, based on the existing legal provision. Only in a few criminal cases involving Jews was the Exchequer allowed to intervene. The jury in such cases consisted exclusively of Jews.[139]

A mixed court was used in legal disputes between English and Jewish parties. Among the first four judges appointed for this category of case were two Jews, although it appears that this provision was abandoned at a later stage.[140]

The court of the Exchequer had to decide all cases which pertained to the laws passed for Jews, laws which the Jews themselves often ignored. The ecclesiastical courts, and even the king's own courts, were forbidden to pronounce justice on such matters. The fact that this was not always observed is evident from the king's warnings to the former not to concern themselves with such cases.[141]

The cases that arose as a result of disputes between English people as debtors and Jews as creditors are also likely to have been very common.[142] And if the king had confiscated financial claims from Jews, he also sometimes appeared as a party in court.

According to the historians we have surveyed, the activity of the judicial department was limited to the above matters. However, it seems necessary to point out that other functions were undoubtedly carried out by the judges in question.

There are often instructions from the king to the judges to release certain English people from a debt and demand that the Jews return the debt bonds in their possession.[143]

Regarding other identified activity, however, it is difficult to determine which of the two departments had competence in the matter.

One day, King Edward I learned that the Jews were oppressing a certain Robert Sturmy because he was unable to fulfil his obligations to them. He only got into this predicament because of the enormously usurious interest rates. The Jews apparently intended to take action against him with the help of the Jewish Exchequer, but the king ordered the judges to grant him a deferment.[144]

The king's motive for his order is clearly demonstrated, as he bases it on the fact that the debtor should be granted ‘reasonable instalment payments in order to enable him to repay the debt

136 Gross: *Exchequer*, p. 187.
137 Gross: *Exchequer,* p. 190.
138 Gross: *Exchequer,* p. 189.
139 Rigg: *Exchequer*, Vol. II, p. XV; Rigg: *Select Pleas*, p. XXI.
140 Rigg: *Exchequer*, Vol. II p. XV; Rigg: *Select Pleas*, p. XX.
141 Prynne, Vol. I, (2nd ed.), p. 34. Translator’s note: Prynne gives examples of cases not to be dealt with by the ecclesiastical courts, but instead by the Jews’ own ‘proper delegated Judges’. These include: ‘delinquency against an Ecclesiastical person’, ‘Sacrilege’, ‘laying violent hands upon a Clerk’ and ‘adultery with a Christian woman’.
142 Gross: *Exchequer,* p. 204.
143 *Rotuli Literarum Patentium* p. 31; *Rotuli de Liberate* p. 24, 34, 35, 38.
144 Madox: *Exchequer*, Vol. I, p. 252. Translator’s note: The verb ‘oppress’ is that used in the original source.

without endangering his existence'.[145] The king's forbearance is even more evident in another case in which he demands that 'inquiries should be made to determine whether the debtor is able to pay without jeopardising the maintenance of himself and his family'.[146]

The barrister James Macmullen Rigg has painstakingly and exhaustively researched the court proceedings of the juridical side of the Jewish Exchequer.[147] His findings will be of particular interest to lawyers. For the purposes of this work, however, it will suffice to state that the regulations governing the hearings, service of lawsuits, etc. were fairly consistent with the general civil procedure rules of the time.

The head office of the Jewish Exchequer was in Westminster, at that time a city near London. The highest officials were usually called '*Justiciarii ad custodiam Judaeorum assignati*', in other words, Justices assigned to the custody of the Jews. The number of these justices fluctuated continually. The posts must have been of particular importance because they were occupied by high-ranking Christian men of the time.[148]

Their appointment was made by the king. They each had to report to the Accountant about all financial transactions in their department, and it was not uncommon for them to discover irregularities that were mainly due to bribes on the part of the Jews.[149]

There was also the so-called '*Presbyter omnium Judaeorum Angliae*' or '*Presbyter Judaeorum*', who was appointed by Richard the Lionheart's successor, King John. This 'Archpresbyter of all the Jews of England' was guaranteed very special protection, and all English people were told, under threat of punishment, to respect him because he was 'the royal Jew who had been employed in the king's service'. It almost seems like a joke that this archpriest of the Jews was appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury.[150] He was elected from among the leading Jews and was probably appointed for life, since we find only six holders of this office during the period 1200-1290.[151] His rights and obligations are no longer known in detail. He probably advised the king on setting the poll tax, and helped the court with the translation and interpretation of Jewish contracts.[152] The king as well as the Jews benefited greatly from the establishment of the Exchequer. Above all, the king could always determine the amount of the Jews' wealth from the registers and tax them accordingly. Furthermore, he always had a copy of the debt bonds, so that he was protected against their destruction, as in the York case.

In addition, the taxation of individual transactions was made easier for him, as he could easily determine the transactions carried out from the documents and entries in the register. Apparently the king levied a one-time tax of 10% when a deal was concluded, certainly a very worthwhile source of income.[153] Meanwhile, the Exchequer provided legal guarantees to the Jews for their business of usury. The only people who suffered were the English people themselves. They had to pay loan interest either to the king or to the Jews, with the only difference being that the former sometimes exercised leniency.

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145 Madox: *Exchequer*, Vol. II, p. 209, footnote N.
146 Madox: *Exchequer*, Vol. II, p. 208, footnote L.
147 Rigg: *Exchequer*, Vol. III, p. XXXI ff.
148 Madox: *Formulare Anglicanum*., p. 77; *Chronica Majora*, Vol. V, p. 261, 345; *Rymer's Fœdera*, Vol. I, p. 362; *Chronicles of Edward I*, Vol. I, p. 95; Prynne, Vol. II, pp. 80, 84, 98.
149 Madox: *Exchequer*, Vol. I, p. 252 ff.
150 *Rotuli Chartarum*, Vol. I, Part I, pp. 6-7.
151 *Rymer's Fœdera*, Vol. I, p. 95, 362, 591; Tovey, p. 59; Prynne, Vol. II, pp. 54, 80.
152 Prynne, Vol. II, p. 71.
153 *Rotuli de Oblatis et Finibus*, pp. 197, 202, 210, 231, 236.

Population Figures

Before we discuss the reign of Richard the Lionheart's successor, let us make a few further observations about the Jewish population at the end of the 12th century.

Jacobs has gone to great pains to determine the number of Jews living in 12th-century England.[154] His research involved going through the 12th-century Pipe Rolls and the other documents at the Record Office, and noting every Jewish name that was mentioned in some context. Using this method, he has drawn up a list containing about 750 names. He rightly notes that these refer to four generations, but only to the heads of the families. Thus, based on his findings, Jacobs comes to the conclusion that there were around 2,000 Jews in England at the end of the 12th century.[155] To get to this figure he also factored in that around 500 Jews were probably killed during the massacres of 1190. If it is now assumed that the English population at that time was around 1.5 million, then the Jewish population accounted for just under 1.5 percent of the total.

154 Jacobs, pp. 345-383.
155 Jacobs, p. 381.

The Jews Under King John

The already mentioned successor of Richard the Lionheart, King John (1199-1216) was initially fond of the Jews. After he appointed the archpresbyter of the Jews, straight after ascending the throne, he continued to be friendly towards them.

In the law, or 'charter', dated April 10th, 1201,[156] John expressly confirmed to the Jews that their previous privileges would continue. They would remain exempt from Customs duties and taxes, and, like the king himself, would be exempt from all tolls, levies and wine taxes, and were guaranteed every kind of protection. They were also allowed to accept as pawn or pledge all types of asset, with the exception of church goods [and any cloth 'stained with blood'], and to sell these assets after a year and a day of possession. In addition, they continued to have their own jurisdiction. The already de facto standard practice of not confiscating a Jew's estate when he or she died, but instead levying a high inheritance tax, was enshrined in law.

However, two important procedural innovations appear to have been created. After this time, if an Englishman wanted to file a lawsuit against a Jew, he had to consent to being tried by Jewish judges. These judges, namely the rabbis, then basically spoke according to Talmudic law.[157] In such a courtroom situation, the Englishman had little hope of prevailing, especially since the law also stipulated that a Jew did not have to make any statement against another and that the oath of a Jew was worth as much as the oaths of twelve Christians.[158]

As we read in Tovey [p. 62; the modern version from Pearl, p. 38, is substituted for clarity]:

> The Charter also decreed that if anyone took up a prosecution against a Jew without a witness, the Jew could be acquitted after taking a single oath on his Scroll of the Law; and if the Crown took up litigation against a Jew, he would be likewise acquitted after taking an oath on the Rolls.

How could such a law have possibly benefitted the jurisprudence of the time? Once again it was only the people who suffered.

Of course, the king did not assent to this charter, which was so favourable to the Jews, for nothing – the Jews had to pay him £3,200, or 4,000 marks – but in the end it was the people who ultimately had to pay this sum when the Jews raised the interest rates.[159]

This apparent favouritism caused large numbers of Jews to come to England from the European continent, [160] a new wave of immigration which drove the native English population to despair. The people rebelled, and riots broke out in London in 1203. It is in this year that we find a proclamation from the king to the people of London that he would not tolerate any excesses against the Jews under any circumstances. He called on the burgesses [i.e. the freemen] to defend the Jews,

156 *Rotuli Chartarum*, Vol. I, Part I, p. 93.
157 Margoliouth: *History*, Vol. I, p. 123.
158 *Select Civil Pleas*, Vol. I, p. 3.
159 *Rotuli de Oblatis*, pp. 133, 402, 418.
160 Hyamson: *History*, p. 48; Margoliouth: *History*, Vol. I, p. 124.

declaring that they would pay with their own blood if harm befell any Jew.[161] Apparently this strict decree had the intended effect, for no more unrest against the Hebrews was heard of for a while.

Surprisingly, the next few years saw a change in the king's attitude towards the Jews. Many Jewish historians conclude that King John was initially friendly towards them only out of diabolical calculation. This may be so, but it has not been proven. Rather, another explanation is at least equally worthy of consideration: that once again the Jews themselves were solely responsible for this turn of events due to their bad behaviour.

As always in history, they apparently could not tolerate the favour they received from the king and thus forfeited his goodwill, as can be seen from the following incidents.

A year after the London riots, on the death of his mother, King John issued an extremely far-reaching amnesty law[162] in which all criminals, regardless of the type of crime they had committed, were to be released from prison. Only Jewish criminals were exempt from this benefit of the law, which was certainly due to the fact that Jewish criminality had got completely out of hand. The very next year, it became necessary to promulgate a special law that imposed a stricter penalty for coin clipping.[163] The assumption of Jewish involvement is further reinforced by the legal ruling according to which, if there were coins found that had been devalued by clipping, the Jewish owner was to be viewed as the perpetrator from the outset until proven otherwise. It stands to reason that the Jews would often have used their monopoly on moneylending to force the coins that they themselves had devalued onto someone seeking a loan.

The fact that this law did not have the intended effect can be seen from a new decree issued by the king in 1206,[164] according to which the authorities were to carry out detailed investigations into the money-related crimes that had become common again. Even back then, strict laws were apparently not enough to deter Jews from committing serious crimes.

These facts immediately suggest that it was not the king who lacked goodwill toward the Jews, but the other way around. He had greatly benefitted them with the charter of 1201, and it cannot therefore be assumed that he completely changed his attitude just three years later for the motives attributed to him. It is much more likely that it was solely the Jews who embittered the king through their behaviour. Given this hypothesis, one should consider evaluating the following events from this perspective.

In 1210, all of the Jews were arrested and brought together into one place in Bristol.[165] Apparently the king suspected that the debt entries in the registers were not true. In any case, immediately after the mass arrest he levied a poll tax of 66,000 marks, or around £53,000 (one mark then being equal to £0.8), and it took the most severe medieval torture to eventually collect this amount. This may confirm the suspicion that the registers were indeed in disorder, for in 1188 the Jews had paid the far larger sum of £60,000 easily and without the use of force. Since the year 1190, i.e. for 20 years, the Jews had been able to carry out their business of usury under the king’s express protection. This must have given them enough time to extract a much larger sum from the people, as indicated by later payments, taking into account each individual period of time. The use of force

161 Hardy: *Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 61; Tovey, pp. 67-8. Translator’s note: I was unable to find any data with this Hardy reference, having explored all volumes in the series.
162 *Rymer’s Fœdera*, Vol. I, p. 90.
163 *Rotuli de Oblatis*, Vol. I, Part 1, p. 47.
164 *Rotuli de Oblatis*, Vol. I, Part 1, p. 54.
165 Gervase of Canterbury, Vol. II, p. 105; Rogeri de Wendover, Vol. II, p. 54; *Chronica Majora* Vol. II. p. 528; Madox: *Exchequer*, Vol. I, p. 223.

appears to have been applied quite brutally. It is reported that a Jew from Bristol, who had refused to pay the sum of around £7,330, had a tooth pulled out every day that he refused to pay up, and that he only agreed to make the payment when he had a single tooth left.[166] Indeed, the sum was paid quite quickly.

A few years later the barons revolted against the king. The nobles were generally hostile to the Jews, to whom they were indebted. The war ended with the barons' victory and the subsequent promulgation of the famous Magna Carta, which laid the foundation for the free rights of the English. Given the barons' hatred of the Jews, it is not surprising that the charter in question included special provisions for protecting the English with regard to Jewish usurers.[167] Among other things, the charter stipulated that a minor who inherited an estate that was burdened with debts to Jews did not have to pay any interest on the debt while he remained underage. Similarly, if a man died owing money to the Jews, his wife was to have her dowry and pay nothing towards the debt from it. If the indebted man had left underage children, their needs had first to be provided for, with the debt to the Jews (and any other creditors) to be paid out of the residue.

However, the peace in England was to be short-lived. In January 1216, in the course of capturing Berwick from King Alexander II of Scotland during what later became known as the First Barons' War, King John had prisoners tortured to death in the most cruel way. A trustworthy source tells us that 'the king brought Jews with him to teach his people about this wickedness'.[168] It is worth noting that, even at this time, the Jews already had the ingenuity required for such sadistic practices. Nothing has changed in this regard either, as their role in similar crimes in Red Spain and Russia is all too well documented.

The opinion of the Jewish historian Hyamson is interesting. He claims that the Jews ended up in this position of executioner because the English refused to take part in such cruel tortures, which meant that the king then 'had recourse to his Jews, whom he compelled to act as the ministers of his barbarous designs'.[169] However, despite diligent research, we were unable to find this perspective in the Melrose Chronicle, which Hyamson cites as the source for his assertion. Rather, only the excerpt cited above is found in the traditional history.

166 *Roger de Wendover*, Vol. II, p. 54. *Chronica Majora*, Vol. II, p. 528. Translator's note: 'B. B.' (p.7) describes this man as 'Abraham of Bristol', while Rye (pp. 339-40) believes this unfortunate man to have been the magnate Isaac of Norwich. See also Adler (pp. 142-3) for a discussion of the event.

167 *Magna Carta*, p. 2 ff. Translator's note: The points noted above are to be found in clauses 10 and 11 of the charter.

168 *Chronica de Mailros*, p. 122 [page number for the 1835 Stevenson edition]. Translator's note: For those who wish to examine the original Latin: 'xviij. kalendas Februarii [Jan. 15] cepit Johannes rex Anglie villam et castellum de Berwic, ubi cum rutariis suis feroci supra modum et inhumana usus est tyrannide, utriusque enim sexus homines quoscunque satellites diaboli apprehendere potuerunt, alios per articulos manuum et pedum suspendentes, alios diversis suppliciis torquentes, nefandi questus intuitu immanissime cruciaverunt. Ibi etiam Judeos secum adduxisse et magistros malicie illos effecisse refertur.'

169 Hyamson: *History*, p. 50. Translator's note: Quoted elements reproduced verbatim from original source.

Problems Continue to Ferment

King John died in 1216, and his nine-year-old son succeeded him to the throne as Henry III (1216-1272). The regency was led by men who abandoned the anti-Jewish policies of the final years of King John's reign and, by contrast, gave the Jews every protection. It can be seen that these regents repeatedly advocated for the well-being of the Jews through numerous decrees.[170] The result, as always, was a greater increase in Jewish wealth and further Jewish immigration from the European mainland on the one hand,[171] and the greater exploitation and deepening rancour of the English people on the other. The benevolence of these advisors went so far, that all Jews were released from prison after an amnesty law.[172] In 1218 a law was promulgated requiring them to wear a badge identifying their race,[173] consisting of two strips of white linen or parchment prominently placed on their clothing. Historians argue as to whether this law was to the advantage[174] or disadvantage[175] of Jewish interests. Whatever the case, there was undoubtedly a reason for the law's enactment that we can only guess at today.

In 1208, it was necessary to sentence the Jew Isaac of Norwich to a fine of around £6,000.[176] No further details are known about the reason. However, it was certainly due to a proven serious crime, since it is undisputed that the king or his regents showed every favour to the Jews at that time and this penalty cannot therefore have been caused by a general hostile attitude.

Immigration to England must have continued to be significant. However, at a popular level there was clearly a desire to stop this influx, reflected in the fact that the Jews were often not allowed into the country by the wardens of the Cinque Ports, who seized them on arrival and threw them into prison.[177] The royal protection, however, still prevailed, and as soon as the king heard of this treatment, he issued an order to all of the relevant port authorities that all foreign Jews should have freedom of entry.[178] In order to incorporate the newcomers into the financial system of the Exchequer of the Jews, it was also stipulated that they had to report their name and whereabouts to the Exchequer judges, and they were also not allowed to leave the country without royal permission.

The more Jews came into the country, the greater the growth in usury, and the more desperate the people’s plight. However, knowing that the Jews enjoyed the protection of the king and his advisors, the English did not dare do anything. Unexpectedly, the church came to the aid of her flock, not least because – as has already been explained – the church also suffered greatly from

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170 *Patent Rolls*, Vol. I, p. 23, 30, 59, 157.
171 Margoliouth: *History*, Vol. I, p. 133 ff.
172 Hyamson: *History*, p. 51.
173 *Rymer’s Fœdera*, Vol. I, Part 1, p. 151. Translator’s note: This law was evidently England’s way of enacting the 68th Constitution (or Canon) of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which demanded that Jews (and Muslims) were to be distinguishable from Christians by the character of their dress while in public in every Christian province at all times.
174 Tovey, p. 81 ff.; Hyamson: *History*, p. 52. Translator’s note: William Prynne, in *The Second Part of a Short Demurrer* [pp. 21-22], reports from his study of the Close Rolls that King Henry had instructed the appointment of special justices for the Jews, ‘for their custody and affaires’ in every town where the Jews resided ‘to protect them and theirs from injury’. To this end the Jewish badge was to be worn so that ‘they might be manifestly distinguished from Christians, and the better known and secured from injury and violence by those their new Protectors’.
175 Margoliouth: *History*, Vol. I, p. 136; Rye, s. 152.
176 Rye, p. 151.
177 Hyamson: *History*, p. 52.
178 *Patent Rolls*, Vol. I, p. 180.

Jewish usury. In addition, Jewish efforts to convert Christians to Jewish teachings continued unabated, and a deacon had even converted to the Jewish faith out of love for a Jewess.[179] The church therefore believed that it had to act on its own initiative. At the 1222 Synod of Oxford,[180] under the leadership of the Archbishop of Canterbury Stephen Langton, the renowned 'hero of Magna Charta',[181] it was decreed:

> That Jews do not keep Christian slaves [servants]. And let the slaves be compelled by ecclesiastical censure to observe this; and the Jews by canonical punishment, or by some extraordinary penalty contrived by the Diocesans. Let them not be permitted to build any more synagogues, but be looked upon as debtors to the churches of the parishes wherein they reside, as to tithes and offerings. To prevent likewise the mixture of Jewish men and women with Christians of each sex, we charge, by authority of the General Council, that the Jews of both sexes wear a linen cloth, two inches broad and four fingers long, of a different colour from their own clothes, on the upper garment, before their breast; and that they be compelled to this be ecclesiastical censure. And let them not presume to enter into any church, nor for that end lodge their goods there. If they do let them be corrected by the Bishop.

What must have been the prevailing conditions if these latter impositions were deemed necessary!

At the same time as this decree, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishops of Lincoln and Norwich issued a decree prohibiting all Englishmen under their ecclesiastical jurisdiction from having any intercourse, least of all sexual, with Jews. In accordance with this regulation, it was also forbidden to buy anything from Jews or to provide them with food or other necessities for subsistence in return for payment.

However, the king viewed these measures as an infringement of his authority and apparently feared that the boycott demanded would lead to a gradual starvation of the Jews. As a result, he published a royal precept dissolving the church's injunctions, and directing the officers concerned to command all merchants and storekeepers to sell food and other necessities to Jews under pain of imprisonment, 'any spiritual inhibition notwithstanding'.[182]

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179 *Annales Monastici*, Vol. IV, p. 62; *Chronica Majora* Vol. III, p. 71; *Chronica Minora*, Vol. II, p. 254. Translator's note: Rabbi Eli Brackman's 2024 online essay 'Haggai of Oxford', finds that there appears to have been two cases of Christian religious men converting to Judaism in the 12th century, which may account for some of the confusion between sources. Nevertheless, it does appear that deacon Robert of Reading converted to Judaism, a process which included undergoing circumcision and being renamed Haggai of Oxford, and then married a Jewess. As he refused to recant, the Oxford Synod of 1222, the same council described above, ordered that he be degraded and burnt at the stake. This execution took place on Sunday, April 17th, 1222, and is a reminder that Christians (not just Jews) were also very capable of killing their apostates. See: https://www.oxfordchabad.org/templates/blog/post.asp?aid=708481&PostID=124293&p=1 . In addition, F. W. Maitland's *The Deacon and the Jewess* and Chapter 6 of Horowitz [see Translator's Bibliography for both] provides an interesting background to the case.

180 Tovey, p. 81.

181 Leeming, p. 164 ff. Translator's note: Langton's decree is reproduced verbatim from page 53 of Hyamson's *History,* although it should be noted that Aldag in his gloss of the same reminded the reader that the church's order for a Jewish badge was simply a reiteration of the previous secular law passed in 1218. Hyamson (p. 68) also reminds us that it would not be until 1253 that the secular state took up the majority of the Synod's 1222 directives.

182 Tovey, pp. 82-3. *Rotuli Litterarum Clauserum*, Vol. I, p. 567. Translator's note: Quoted element taken from Hyamson: *History*, p. 53. This event is also discussed, and the original Latin sources reproduced, in Prynne's *The Second Part of a Short Demurrer*, pp. 27-28.

In the years that followed, the Jews continued to enjoy the king's special protection. As long as the regent acting on his behalf, Hubert de Burgh, was still in office, this favour remained, but things changed immediately after his deposition. An outward sign of this was initially the levying of a poll tax of 4,000 marks (£3,200) in 1226, and soon afterwards another of 6,000 marks (£4,800) the latter of which was not paid until 1230.[183] Tovey even claims, citing the monk Matthew Paris, that a third of the Jews' total wealth was confiscated by the king that year.[184] However, this does not seem to be the case, because further poll taxes totalling 18,000 marks (£14,400) were levied in the years 1232-34.[185] This much larger sum would have been impossible to collect if a third of the Jews' funds had already been taken from them in 1230, as this left the Jews insufficient time to make up their losses through usury.

Naturally, the king gradually withdrew his favour from the Jews. It is therefore not surprising that, alongside the church, common people once more started to assert themselves against Jewish power. Leadership came from both the strengthening cities and the increasingly powerful barons.

The fact that the cities were the first in this fight is only too understandable, because it was only in these places that the Jews were allowed to reside (with exceptions), which meant that the burgesses not only had to endure the Jewish presence, but had also come to fear it, as it imperilled their newly won rights and freedoms. At the beginning of the 13th century, many cities had bought their self-government from the king or nobility at great expense and corresponding sacrifices. The freedoms consisted mainly in the fact that they were no longer subject to the royal courts, but only to their own. However, the Jews were expressly excluded from this and, as the king's property, were subject only to his jurisdiction. As a result, they also did not have to pay any taxes to the cities, which was always a strong reason for the people's bitterness. In principle, the king had no power within the city's boundaries.[186] However, in various cities, such as London and Oxford, it had also been decreed that the Jews could use the king's sheriffs to collect their demands. As would be expected, such actions were most feared and rejected by the city's burgesses because they perceived an encroachment on their rights.[187] When the king commanded his sheriffs and officers to elect burgesses to explicitly protect the Jews from all injury in order to avert riots in various cities, the people's resentment intensified.[188]

The beginning of 1234 sees the first attempts by the cities' burgesses to expel the Hebrews, who were an unwanted foreign body in their midst. When the king did not sufficiently accommodate these wishes, riots broke out. The Jews' houses in Norwich were looted and burned down.[189] Hyamson reports that the Bishop of Norwich turned to the king's advisors to request action against the Jews, informing them that 'the well-founded complaints of the Christians against the Jews were becoming unbearable, and that the extortion, oppression and usury of the perfidious people… had reduced the people to a condition of exhaustion.'[190] However, his appeal went

183 *Rymer's Fœdera*, Vol. I, pp. 503, 634; Madox, Vol. I, p. 224, 260.
184 Tovey, p. 88; *Chronica Majora*, Vol. III, p. 194.
185 Rigg: *Select Pleas*, p. XXVI; Hyamson: *History*, p. 54.
186 *Chronica Jocelini*, p. 2; *De Antiquis Legibus*, p. 16; Tovey p. 50.
187 Abrahams: *The Expulsion…*, p. 18.
188 *Patent Rolls*, Vol. 1281-1292, p. 15. Tovey, p. 77-79. Translator's note: Abrahams (p.19) notes that different cities had different orders of protection – in London, mayor and barons were to answer with their own lives if ill befell the Jews; in Worcester, York, Lincoln, Stamford, Bristol, Northampton and Winchester, the king's sheriffs were directly charged with Jewish protection, while in Gloucester and Hereford the burgesses were held personally responsible.
189 Tovey, p. 101.
190 Hyamson, *History*, p. 54. Translator's note: Quotation reproduced verbatim from original source.

unheeded[191] and so the outraged people secured their own rights by forcibly removing the Jews from their midst. Something similar happened in Oxford in 1243.[192] With the king's growing antipathy towards the Jews, we see that he granted more and more cities the right to refuse the settlement of Jews or to expel those who were already present. In 1245 he even passed a general law that forbade all Jews – except those who already had a special residence permit from the king – to settle anywhere other than where their co-religionists were already located.[193]

Violent anti-Semitism also appeared early on in the ranks of the barons, the first beginnings of which can be found in the second half of the 12th century. Even if the participation of the English knights in the Crusades was not as great as that of the Continent, we still find numerous nobles among them, especially in the time of Richard the Lionheart. However, such long expeditions turned out to require many purchases, which involved large expenditures of money. In addition, the crusaders had to carry a considerable amount of money with them in order to cover their living costs. They had hardly any liquid money of their own. They were ready to make any sacrifice to serve the great ideal. They therefore pledged their belongings, especially their land, without considering the enormous usurious interest rates. The Jews took advantage of this economic situation ruthlessly, and the foundation for a large part of their wealth was likely laid through such transactions.[194] Repaying the debts was almost always impossible because their lands did not produce enough income to pay the usurious interest. Thus the barons were at the mercy of the Jews, or the king if he expropriated the Jews' claims.

The barons therefore realised that they could only defend themselves against exploitation by forming a common front against the king and the Jews, which is why it is not surprising that they inserted the aforementioned clauses into the Magna Carta. However, circumstances had increasingly gone against their interests, and so, in the 1244 Great Council [or 'Parliament', as it was coming to be known], they petitioned the king for the right to be allowed to appoint one of the judges in the Jewish Exchequer. In this way, through the representative they had chosen, they not only had an insight into Jewish financial transactions, but also a share in their regulation.[195] They had also realised that they could only be successful in their fight against the king for greater privileges if they simultaneously defeated the Jews, because the king was able to repeatedly fall back on the Jews' wealth for his military conflicts with the barons.[196]

The situation at this point in time was, then, that the people, nobility and church were all in one camp, which meant that all that remained was either to win over the king on the Jewish Question or force him to adopt their desired policy. It is astonishing to find that again and again in history, in times of severe distress and impending danger, the Jews worsen their own situation through acts of infamy that are obvious to everyone around them, and which almost exclusively contribute to their own downfall. This would also prove to be the case in the England of this period.

In Norwich in the year 1230, a Jew called Jacob abducted a five-year-old Christian boy called Odard, and with the help of others, forcibly circumcised him and held him captive. However, after a few days, the child escaped Jewish captivity and found refuge with a local Christian woman and her daughter, while a neighbour recognised the boy as the son of Benedict, the physician of Norwich.

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191 Abrahams: *The Expulsion…*, p. 19.
192 *Annales Monastici*, Vol. IV, p. 91.
193 Prynne, Vol. II, p. 75; Madox: *Exchequer*, Vol. I, pp. 248-9. Abrahams, p. 20.
194 Hyamson: *History*, p. 11; Gross: *Exchequer*, p. 173; Abrahams: *Expulsion*, p. 23.
195 *Chronica Majora*, Vol. IV, p. 367.
196 Hyamson: *History*, pp. 62-3.

When the Jews managed to find the boy's location, they arrived at the woman's house in large numbers and tried to take him by force. When the English, including the boy's father who had arrived at the scene, refused to hand him over, the Jews even turned to the relevant authorities – the Constable and then the Bailiffs of Norwich – and asked for assistance in having him returned to them. But the authorities apparently refused to intervene, beyond checking on the well-being of the boy. There is no further information known about this event regarding this year. It was not until some time later that the crime was processed by the authorities. Of the thirteen Jews finally indicted in 1234-1235, only ten appeared in court. The preliminary investigations ended with the burden of proof being sufficient to begin criminal proceedings and take the perpetrators into custody, who were then sent to London to be tried by the king's court. The king himself apparently presided over the trial, but in the presence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, as well as numerous nobles and bishops, he declared himself incompetent because, in his opinion, the case belonged before the ecclesiastical court.

After this decision, it was clear to the Jews that, given the well-known attitude of the clergy towards them, a harsh punishment was to be expected from the ecclesiastical court. They therefore, with the help of other Hebrews, turned to the king, asking him to delay the hearing and to refer the matter before a court specially provided under their charter, which was also achieved through numerous bribes. The court that was now appointed took no action, and nothing more is known about the case for several years. Suddenly, for unknown reasons, the king took up the criminal case again, and, despite previous and new bribes – as Hyamson complains[197] – ordered the local justices of Norwich to try the crime as they thought best. In 1241 we hear that some of the Jews were executed.[198] The Norfolk antiquarian Walter Rye has endeavoured to irrefutably demonstrate that the Jews were innocent of the accusation that the circumcision was a prelude to ritual murder (as has been the common assertion of traditional historians), which he believes he can infer from 23 contemporary documents in particular. His detailed study of these documents is found in a dedicated article, which features the documents themselves in an appendix. However, his thesis that explains the Jews' actions – namely, that the boy was a child of baptised Jews – is neither convincing nor proven. Furthermore, Rye was also unable to refute the other contemporary sources.[199]

197 Hyamson: *History* p. 58-59.

198 *Historica Minora*, Vol. II, p. 375, Vol. III, p. 271; *Chronica Majora*, Vol. III, p. 543, Vol. IV, p. 30.

199 Rye: *Norfolk Miscellany*, Vol. I. p. 340. Translator's note: I feel that Aldag has rather unfairly represented Rye here, given that Rye's thesis does seem plausible. He had proved that Benedict was a local Jewish name of the time, and that physician was a common Jewish profession. In addition, the boy, whom the Jewish abductors had renamed Jurnepin, was told not to eat pork when in the Christian house by the Jews trying to regain possession of 'their Jew', suggesting that they were concerned about his continued Jewish identity and cleanliness – doubtful of the actions of a group of people wishing to crucify a Christian boy. Further, if they were related to the boy, this would explain the otherwise jaw-dropping *chutzpah* of trying to take him back from his 'own people' and even his own father, to the point of appealing to the authorities to do so. This 1230 event is also echoed by a later event in Jewish history in England: Prynne [Vol. II, p. 40] reports that in the 21st year of Henry III's reign (c. 1237), some Jews in Oxford had been imprisoned for abducting a baptised Jewish child. Less compelling is Rye's speculation that the four- to five-year delay in the indictment might be explained by the Benedict's *converso* reluctance not to proceed against his own people, being eventually pushed into doing so by an enthusiastic clergy; the obvious reason was simply that the next eyre was not due to take place in Norwich until 1234, there being up to a seven-year interval between eyres [Summerson, p. 322], and the king's coroner(s) had obviously determined to proceed with the case due to it being one of serious bodily harm [Gross, p. 662]. Whether or not this was a medieval Jewish version of the Mortara case, Aldag is nevertheless correct in his assertion that such egregious behaviour (regardless of motive) would not endear the Jews to the host population. See Translator's Appendix II for a further discussion of this case.

From the excellent chronicles of the monk Matthew Paris, the report on an incident which took place in Germany and other countries in 1241 is also extremely informative.[200]

At this time, there was fierce fighting in Eastern Europe against the Tartars and Cumans, who had invaded Europe from the East. The Jews, particularly those in Germany, believed that these nomadic warrior tribes from the Eurasian Steppes were descendants of the lost tribes of Israel, and, in Prynne's words 'believing, that the *Tartars* were of their own Nation, entred into a secret League with them, to destroy the Christians, and subdue the whole world to themselves'. As a first way of assisting the invaders, the Jews decided to purchase and send weapons. However, this could under no circumstance be allowed to become known to the Christian world, which is why the following plan was devised.

The rumour was spread, which was all too readily believed, that the Jews had received an order for wine from the Tartars, because, as the Tartars were Jews, they would only drink wine harvested by Jews. The Jews had agreed to deliver thirty casks of this wine. But in order to do the Christian world a service, they would poison it so that a large number of the Tartars would die as a result.

The Christian princes agreed, seeing nothing amiss with the Jews' stated plan. In fact, however, the Jews had secretly packed a large quantity of swords and knives into the hogsheads and it was only through the diligence of the German Customs officials that the crime was discovered and fittingly punished.

Given the circumstances described above, it is not surprising that the situation of the Jews in England became increasingly difficult due to their own actions. One poll tax replaced another. In 1236 they had to cede to the king around £13,000, and in 1239 a third of their assets, or, if they refused, they had to leave the country. They chose the first option. Despite being almost bled dry, they were able to raise taxes of around £15,000 and £44,000 in 1241 and 1244-1245 respectively. And even after these huge payments, they were still able to pay around £7,500 and £4,000 in 1246 and 1247 respectively, around £7,300 in 1249, and in 1250 part of their wealth was confiscated again, although the amount is not certain. For the period spanning 1251-1269, the Jews had to pay another £20,000.[201] These sums can be determined from contemporary records with considerable certainty. The raising of these amounts, which to compare with today's purchasing power must be multiplied by at least 30, is hard to believe. But it was only possible because the Jews were charging interest of up to 86⅔ percent.[202] In this way they were always able to make up for the ravages of royal taxation.

In the meantime, the king had created a supplementary institution to the Jewish Exchequer, which was briefly called the *Parliamentum Judaicum* or 'Jewish Parliament' [also known as the 'Worcester Parliament'].

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200 *Chronica Majora*, Vol. IV, p. 131-3; Prynne, Vol. I, p. 18 [2nd edition, p. 22]; B. B.: pp. 7-8 [p. 12-13 in 1720 edition]. Translator's note: Paris's long description of this incident is clearly the primary source for the other sources cited, and the quotation reproduced verbatim from Prynne is a summary of a much longer speech in *Chronica Majora*, in which the Jews are supposedly quoted as planning to use what is now called 'the Mongol Invasion of Europe' to achieve rule over Christendom.

201 *Chronica Majora*, Vol. III, pp. 220, 292-6; Vol. IV, pp. 88, 260; Vol. V, pp. 115, 441, 487-8; *Rymer's Fœdera*, Vol. I, pp. 274, 293, 315; Prynne, Vol. II, p. 30 ff.; *De Antiques Legibus*, p. 19 ff.; Madox: *Exchequer*, Vol. I, pp. 224-61; Hyamson: *History*, p. 57; Margoliouth, Vol. I, p. 152 ff.; Rye, p. 155 ff.

202 Rye, p. 341. [Original source: *Palgrave's Rise and Progress of the English Commonwealth*, Vol. II, p. 9 ff.] Translator's note: Cf. footnote 29.

An audit of the financial documents deposited in the various branches made the king decide to enact further measures to ensure that all Jewish assets were registered for tax purposes. To this end, in 1240 he appointed various officials who had to make a list of the Jews' assets in the individual cities.[203] This must have been carried out relatively quickly, because the very next year the sheriffs of each county received a writ from the king, ordering them to send to Worcester six of the richest Jews from their county town, for negotiations regarding taxation. From towns with a very small Jewish population, only two representatives had to be chosen.[204]

The Jews, having endured long periods of heavy tallages from the king, therefore hoped that only good things would come from this gathering of their representatives. The content of the various writs to the sheriffs also gave reason to expect this, as the purpose of the meeting was stated: ‘Negotiations with the king for his benefit and that of the Jews.’ As soon as the ‘parliament’ met, however, it became clear that it was just a new method of collecting the Jews' taxes securely. The ‘members’ were obliged, as the king's representatives, to collect set sums from their ethnic kinsmen. They were solely responsible for their mission’s success. In the event of failure, they were to expect the entirety of their wealth to be expropriated. Because their attendance was documented, it appears that the vast majority if not all of their names have been preserved; they were just over a hundred men.[205]

The ‘members’ of this ‘parliament’ also had to demonstrate their ability immediately, or face the consequences. In the first convocation of the ‘parliament’, they were given the task of collecting around £16,000 for the king. However, they did not raise this amount by the appointed time. The king therefore had the members’ assets confiscated, while the members themselves, along with their families, were thrown into prison.

With a new ritual infanticide in London in 1244,[206] the Jews did something else to turn the king, people, barons and church against them. The marks found on the body left the judges in no doubt that it had been a Jewish ritual murder. The child was buried as a martyr near the high altar of [Old] St. Paul's Cathedral. A fine of 60,000 marks, or around £48,000, was imposed on the Jews.

A short time later a new poll tax was demanded of the Jews. This time it was also threatened that if payment were not made, the Jews’ families would be shipped to Ireland. In response, the Hebrews set about ensconcing their families in secluded corners of England. To counteract this, the king gave orders to the competent authorities that every Jewish family had to register in the area in which they lived, otherwise they would be declared outlaws and their assets would be confiscated.[207]

It may also interest the reader to know that in 1245 the Jews were asked to provide most of the money required for the renovation of Westminster Abbey.[208]

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203 *Close Rolls*, Vol. 1237-1242, p. 202 ff.
204 *Close Rolls*, Vol. 1237-1242, p. 346; Prynne, Vol. II, pp. 43-4. Translator’s note: See also Tovey, p. 110.
205 *Close Rolls*, Vol. 1237-1242, pp. 354-5.
206 *Chronica Majora*, Vol. IV, p. 377. Translator’s note: The marks on the child’s body were perceived to be in the shape of Hebrew letters. For the full report on this incident, see Translator’s Appendix II.
207 *Close Rolls*, Vol. 1242-1247, pp. 275, 339.
208 *Chronica Majora*, Vol. IV, p. 427; *Patent Rolls*, Vol. 1232-1247, pp. 474, 478; Madox: *Exchequer*, Vol. II, p. 3; Margoliouth: *History*, Vol. I, pp. 175-6.

Scandals

An informative story about the behaviour and morals of the Jews of that period has come down to us from the year 1250.[209]

A rich Jew named Abraham of Berkhamsted was the declared favourite of the king's brother Richard, the Earl of Cornwall, and he had a wife called Flora who was very pretty and obedient. Abraham had a statue made of the Virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus. He took this statue into his privy and defecated on it day and night to symbolise his boundless contempt for Christianity. He also forced his wife to do the same. In the end, Flora not only refused to follow her husband's request, but is said to have cleaned the statue. When Abraham noticed this, he strangled his wife. But the crime was discovered, and Abraham was arrested and promptly thrown into the Tower of London. However, he turned to his patron, Earl Richard, whom he paid 700 marks (around £500), to help him get released. Before this happened, however, his Jewish brethren accused Abraham of several crimes, particularly of 'Clipping the King's Coin', for which they said he deserved death. At the same time, they offered Earl Richard 1000 marks (around £800) if he would withdraw his support for Abraham. They justified their request by saying that they could no longer tolerate such a criminal in their ranks. In fact, they only wanted to have Abraham executed so that it would be impossible for him to turn king's evidence, and reveal their own numerous crimes in a bid to free himself. Apparently the Jews were unsuccessful in their efforts, because Earl Richard continued to campaign for the murderer Abraham. The latter then fought back against his Jewish enemies and offered to bring the king proof that the Jews in England were the most notorious criminals and traitors. He apparently succeeded in this, for not only was he released, but immediately afterwards a detailed criminal investigation was carried out throughout the kingdom, which established the truth of his allegations and led to severe punishments.

But the very next year the Jews caused new scandals. Despite the recent harsh sentences, they had bribed Jewish Exchequer judges Philip Luvel [Lovell] and Nicholas of St. Albans to act against the interests of the Crown.[210] Here too, everyone involved was severely punished.

In 1252 a new incident occurred. The Jews accused a diligent official, who was in charge of handling Jewish affairs, of abusing his office towards them. Their accusation was so cleverly drafted that it was only after much effort that this official's friends were able to prove his innocence. Here too, the Jews' intentionally false report found its just atonement.[211] It would appear that the Jews did not make the slightest effort to try to reduce popular anger, which was increasing daily, by behaving well. Just a year later, news of a nefarious plan spread throughout England: Jews in Northampton had been plotting to set fire to both that city and London. Fortunately, the conspiracy was discovered in time. William Hughes outlines the plot and reveals the harsh but just punishment that the plotters received:

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209 *Chronica Majora*, Vol. V, p. 114 ff.; Tovey, p. 128; Prynne, Vol. I, p. 20 ff [2nd edition, p. 24 ff]. Translator's note: Quoted element reproduced from the Tovey account. For those wish to research the case, alternative versions of Abraham's toponymic are also rendered Berkhampstead/Berkhampsted/Berkhamstede/Berkamestede/Berkamstude (etc). It is also likely that his wife's name, although rendered Flora in the traditional accounts, was actually Floria, in keeping with the fashion for Jewish women's names at that time.

210 *Chronica Majora*, Vol. V, p. 261; Tovey, p. 132; Prynne, Vol. I, p. 22 [2nd edition, p. 26].

211 *Chronica Majora*, Vol. V, p. 345.

And that which shewed their faithfulness sufficiently, and procured them hatred not in the least degree, was, that in the year 1253 at *Northampton* they combined together, and that for the destruction of that City, which first harboured them; preparing to set even the City of *London* on fire. This could not but enrage much; yet having entred such courses as rendred them more than odious, they are resolved to go on, though to their own destruction. But what they intended to do the City they suffer themselves, for many of them being taken in the same Town where they hatcht their design, are themselves reduced to ashes, in the time of Lent.[212]

212 'W. H.': *Anglo-Judæus*, pp. 16-17. Translator's note: Quotation reproduced verbatim from original source. The author 'B. B.' (*A Historical and Law Treatise*, p. 6) also puts the year of this plot as 1253, and states that 'around 40 Jews were Burnt'. This event is also reported in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, which is the source cited by William Prynne (Vol. I, p. 24 [2nd ed. p. 28]). As we find in Foxe (1875 Cumming edition, Vol. I, p. 475): 'Of the Jews in Northampton, who had among themselves prepared wild-fire, to burn the city of London, for the which divers of them were taken, and burned in the time of Lent, in the said city of Northampton, which was two years before, about the year of our Lord 1253.'

Nuremberg Laws… in 1253

Apparently, after such events, King Henry III was no longer able to ignore the pressure coming from anti-Jewish circles, and issued drastic regulations. It is very interesting to note that this royal ordinance of 1253 has partly the same content as the Nuremberg Laws of 1935. As a result, it is reproduced verbatim below:

> MANDATE OF THE KING TO THE JUSTICES ASSIGNED TO THE CUSTODY OF THE JEWS TOUCHING CERTAIN STATUTES RELATING TO THE JEWS IN ENGLAND WHICH ARE TO BE RIGOROUSLY OBSERVED. THE THIRTY-SEVENTH YEAR OF KING HENRY. A.D. 1253.
>
> The King has provided and ordained etc.: That no Jew remain in England unless he do the King service, and that from the hour of birth every Jew, whether male or female, serve Us in some way. And that there be no synagogues of the Jews in England save in those places in which such synagogues were in the time of King John, the King's father. And that in their synagogues the Jews, one and all, subdue their voices in performing their ritual offices, that Christians may not hear them. And that all Jews answer to the rector of the church of the parish in which they dwell touching all dues parochial relating to their houses. And that no Christian nurse in future suckle or nourish the child of any Jew, nor any Christian man or woman serve any Jew or Jewess, or eat with them or tarry in their houses. And that no Jew or Jewess eat or buy meat in Lent. And that no Jew disparage the Christian Faith, or publicly dispute concerning the same. And that no Jew have secret familiar intercourse with any Christian woman, and no Christian man with a Jewess. And that every Jew wear his badge conspicuously on his breast. And that no Jew enter any church or chapel save for purpose of transit, or linger in them in dishonour of Christ. And that no Jew place any hindrance in the way of another Jew desirous of turning to the Christian Faith. And that no Jew be received in any town but by special license to the King, save only in those towns in which Jews have been wont to dwell.
>
> And that the Justices assigned to the custody of the Jews are commanded that they cause these provisions to be carried into effect, and rigorously observed on pain of forfeiture of the chattels of the said Jews. Witness the King at Westminster, on the 31st day of January. By King and Council.[213]

As far as we can see, according to the evidence currently available, it is not known why the king issued this ordinance. However, it is very likely that it was for the same reasons that led us to publish the Nuremberg Laws.

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213 *Rymer's Fœdera*, Vol. I, p. 293; *Close Rolls*, Vol. 1234-1237, pp. 13-4. Translator's note: This English translation of the full royal mandate has been taken from Rigg: *Select Pleas…*, p. xlix, although 'male child' of the original translation has been substituted for 'child', given that Latin is a gendered language, and the masculine noun was likely used simply as the unmarked form. Careful readers will also note that most of the points listed above are the same as those promulgated by the 1222 Synod of Oxford, which itself took its inspiration from the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. Thus, one could reasonably call this 1253 mandate a secular iteration of the 1222 religious decree.

Persecution of Jews

The people had only received partial protection against the Jews through the 1253 decree, because usury still weighed on them. As a result, major riots broke out again. Jewish historians pity their ethnic kinsmen and condemn the English.[214] But it appears that these historians did not bother to investigate the underlying cause of the violence, otherwise they would certainly have come to the conclusion that the blame lay solely at the feet of the Jews.

In 1254, the Jews sent a delegation led by their archpresbyter Elias to Earl Richard, whom the king had entrusted with the task of collecting a new tallage. They declared themselves unable to stay in England any longer and asked to be allowed to leave the country.[215] They had placed all of their hopes in Earl Richard, as he had already shown them goodwill on several occasions. But even he rejected their petition, especially since France was now closed to Jews, from where they had been expelled in 1253 with a few exceptions.

Just a year later they repeated their petition, but once again without success. Since the king was suffering from a great lack of money, in 1255 he leased the Jews to his brother, Earl Richard, for around £4,000 for ‘some years’, and in return Earl Richard agreed to collect about £13,000 from the Jews in order to settle their debt to the king.[216] Despite everything, under Richard they had full protection and significantly recovered financially.

But in 1255, the Jews themselves were once again to initiate new punishments and disturb their own peace.

They stole an eight-year-old boy, Hugh, from Lincoln, locked him in a room and fed him childish treats. Then they sent to all Jewish communities and requested their presence at the intended crucifixion of the boy. Jews flocked from all over England. The crucifixion then took place, and likewise with all the individual phases of Jesus Christ's suffering. The mother had desperately searched for the whereabouts of her child and learned that the boy had last been seen playing with Jewish children. During the course of house searches, the body was found buried under the floor of a Jewish house. A Jew then revealed the entire crime to the investigating judge and received exemption from punishment insofar as he had been involved.

The king was passing through Lincoln and took the case himself. Even though the Hebrews were directly subordinate to his brother after they had been leased, the power to punish was still in Henry’s hands. Embittered by this new outrage, he immediately had the eighty to ninety Jews suspected of being involved in the murder arrested, the majority of whom were executed.[217] Only some of them were later released.[218] Since representatives from almost all of England's Jewish

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214 Hyamson: *History*, p. 64; Margoliouth, Vol. I, p. 181 ff.

215 *Chronica Majora*, Vol. V, p. 441.

216 *Chronica Majora*, Vol. V, pp. 487-8; Tovey, p. 135. Translator’s note: Quoted element reproduced from Tovey, who had evidently translated Paris’s *aliquot annos* (i.e. it is unclear how long the term of the lease was).

217 *Annales Monastici*, Vol. I, p. 340; Holinshed, Vol. III, p. 253; Foxe, Vol. I, p. 423, col II; *Royal and Historical Letters*, Vol. II, p. 110; *Chronica Majora*, Vol. V, p. 516 ff.; *De Antiquis Legibus*, p. 23. Translator’s note: See Translator’s Appendix II for more information on this incident, as there are many variations between historical versions that should be taken into account. For example, the vast majority of sources agree that the body was found in a well, although opinion varies as to whether this was the well at the house of accused Jew Copin, or a common well. And of the 91 Jews reportedly arrested after Copin’s confession, the common consensus is that only 18 were eventually executed.

218 *Chronica Majora*, Vol. V, p. 553.

communities were present, persecutions broke out everywhere and, despite the protection of Earl Richard, the year 1255 was one of the hardest for Jews in medieval England.[219]

The sufferings of the boy Hugh have provided the material for a number of folk songs and ballads in England, Scotland, and even Normandy in France.

As a result, times would get even worse for the Jews. The lower nobility were still indebted to Jewish usurers and it was only a matter of time before they would take the law into their own hands. A memorandum to the king around the year 1259 testifies to their growing restlessness, in which they complained that, as a result of usury, it was almost impossible to fulfil their current obligations. In addition, there was the still greater evil of the kingdom's grandees buying out the Jews' claims and driving the indebted landowners from their homes and farms in order to expropriate the land.[220]

Apparently this petition was unsuccessful. In any case, it was soon overtaken by domestic political events. Tensions between the king and the barons in 1262 led to the start of what later became known as the Second Barons' War.[221] The king initially had to limit himself to defence and therefore had to give up parts of the country. The hatred against the Jews that had been simmering for decades suddenly boiled over. Wherever the barons had gained overall control, they took bitter revenge for the predations they had endured for years at the hands of the Hebrews, who were plundered and massacred by the hundred in London during the years 1262-64.[222] Regarding the events of 1264, the chronicler of the *Annales Monastici* states that the barons were particularly angry because the Jews had intended to set the city on fire. In terms of the dates, we could not determine with certainty whether this was a reference of the aforementioned attempt of 1253 or a separate incident. However, we find the same story from another historian regarding the year 1264, so it may safely be assumed that there were two separate attempts. The persecutions were repeated in other cities, such as Canterbury, Northampton, Cambridge, Worcester, Lincoln and Winchester.[223] Slaughtered Jews were found everywhere, and all of their property was confiscated by the barons. In Cambridge the barons managed to seize the *archa* containing the debt records, which they then destroyed. The same thing was done in Lincoln. They publicly announced in the parts of the country they initially occupied that all debts to the Jews were to be regarded as settled. Such 'extreme' behaviour can only be properly understood if one recognises how the barons were gradually driven to these measures by usury.

In the end, the power of the barons was broken and peace returned to the country, and similarly the Jews were left unmolested for a while. But the picture is always the same in history: during the good times, the Jew forgets his role as a guest and thus provokes new retaliatory measures against himself through his behaviour. This was to prove just as true in England as elsewhere.

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219 *Chronica Majora*, Vol. V. p. 537.

220 Stubbs: *Select Charters*, p. 377; *Annales Monastici*, Vol. I, p. 442.

221 *Annales Monastici*, Vol. II. p. 100.

222 *Florentii Wigorniensis Chronicon*, Vol. II, p. 192; *Chronicle of William of Rishanger,* pp. 24, 25, 126; *Annales Monastici*, Vol. III, p. 230; *Anglo-Judæus*, p. 20. Translator's note: Hyamson's *History* (p. 75) and 'B. B.' (p.6) state that 700 Jews were slain, with the latter alleging that this slaughter was the revenge for a Jewish plot to poison all of the barons in 1259, which was discovered when the poisonous liquor was found at the house of Jew named Elias, who apparently confessed his guilt before his execution. In Prynne's account (Vol 1, pp. 31-2; 2nd edition, pp. 34-35), the poison proved mortal to some of the noblemen, but Elias, surnamed Bishop, saved himself from punishment by converting, along with two others, to Christianity on Christmas Day.

223 *Annales Monastici*, Vol. II, pp. 101, 363, 371; Vol. IV, p. 142, 143, 448 ff.; *Liber de Antiquis Legibus*, p. 62; Holinshed, Vol. III, p. 267; *Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*, Vol. II, p. 150; Rigg: *Select Pleas*, p. XXXVII.

On the occasion of Ascension Day in 1268, a solemn procession took place in Oxford. The importance of the procession was marked by the presence of Crown Prince Edward and other high dignitaries. When the procession was reaching the spot where the sermon was due to take place, a Jew broke through the crowd of spectators, stopped the march of believers and tore the crucifix that was being carried in the procession out of the bearer's hands. Before the astonished crowd could wrest it from him, he had trampled it underfoot. The heir apparent, who had witnessed this incident himself, reported it to the king. This event must have made a deep impression on the prince and likely guided his entire future policy towards the Jews.[224] The people's anger was indescribable: they had expected a deterrent punishment, but were very disappointed by the extremely moderate retribution. All the Jews had to do was erect a valuable cross at the site of the incident and provide the university with another portable silver cross.[225] The same or similar influences as those of the murderer Abraham were probably at work to prevent a just atonement.

224 Rigg: *Select Pleas*, p. xxxvii; Leonard, p. 127.

225 Tovey, p. 168 ff.; Lyte, p. 67; Leonard, p. 127; Hyamson: *History*, p. 72; Rye, p. 165. Translator's note: For more on this incident, as well as additional reports, including from Jewish sources, of cross destruction and desecration, particularly by expectoration or urination, see Chapter 6 ('The Fascination of the Abomination') of Elliott Horowitz's excellent *Reckless Rites* [in Translator's Bibliography]. Note that Lyte's version of events has a 'number of Jews' making an attack on the cross-bearer. William Prynne also reports on this story, and reproduces his Latin sources in his *Second Part of a Short Demurrer (*pp. 108-111). I should also state that, while my survey of the sources was not exhaustive, I found no reference to the popular mood regarding the punishment.

Harsh Laws

The common people, led by the barons and the church, could do nothing against the Jews at that point in time, but when they joined forces with Crown Prince Edward, his mother and the then Chancellor, Walter de Merton, the anti-Jewish will of the people 'gathered irresistible force, and resulted in most drastic measures'.[226] Perhaps these measures would not have been taken if a common anti-Jewish front of people, nobility and church had not come together, the formation of which had been accelerated by the arrogant behaviour of the Hebrews. Despite the fact that in individual cases they already held land in pledge which had recently been taken away from them, they believed, in apparent complete obliviousness to how their situation in England had deteriorated, that the time had come to demand the privileges associated with land ownership for themselves.[227] These privileges included the right of a landowner to exercise guardianship of the minors on his property, to grant permission for marriage, and to be the patron of a church. While the former two prerogatives were already confirmed by feudal law, the church recognised the latter as inseparable from land ownership. When the Jews claimed these privileges, a storm of indignation arose among the people. The nobility and the church feared that the proposed measure would encroach on their monopoly position, and the population resentfully rejected Jewish patronage. Instead of being satisfied with their lot after the previous difficult years, the Jews believed that now, more than ever, they were entitled to special benefits. They made their demands formally to the Great Council, which would have to approve the legislation, and some of its members, who were probably connected to the Jews, did not seem averse to their demands. A Franciscan monk who somehow had access to the Council meeting in question spoke out vehemently against the proposal. He was followed by the Archbishop of York and the Bishops of Lichfield, Coventry and Worcester, who made it clear to the Jews that it was entirely by the king's grace that they were tolerated in England. It was impertinent to demand equality with English subjects and perhaps they would even claim nobility later. The anti-Jewish faction received decisive support from Crown Prince Edward.[228] Not only were the Jews' demands rejected, but at the end of the session the following drastic law, *Provisiones de Judaismo liberatae ad Scaccarum* (1269), was drafted by the aforementioned Walter de Merton, in an attempt to force the Hebrews back into their proper place:

> At the feast of St. Hilary in the fifty-third year of the reign of King Henry, son of King John, it is provided by the King himself, with the advice of the Lord Edward, his eldest son, and his other trusty lieges, for the better ordering of the land and the relief of the Christians from the burdens laid upon them by the Jewry of England: that all debts to Jews which are fees [i.e. debts that are based on or tied to fiefs (land estates)], and which are at present in the hands of the Jews and are not assigned or sold to Christians, provided that before this day they have been confirmed by the King or enrolled at the Exchequer, be quit to the Christians by whom they are owing, and to their heirs for ever, with their arrears; and that the charters of the fee-debts aforesaid, wherever they shall be found, be returned to the Christians by whom the debts are owing, or to their heirs. And

226 Rigg: *Select Pleas*, p. xxxvii. Translator's note: Quotation reproduced verbatim from original source.
227 *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii S. Albani*, Vol. I, p. 401; *Liber de Antiquis Legibus*, p. 234 ff.
228 *Annales Monastici*, Vol. IV, p. 221.

> if perchance any such charter be hereafter placed or found in the Chest, let it be held of none. And let no Jew from this day forth take or make any such fee-debt.
>
> And in like manner it is provided that no Jew from this day forth sell any such fee to a Christian on pain of forfeiture of life and chattels, and that no Christian purchase it, on pain of forfeiture of his chattels and his inheritance.
>
> And in the like manner it is provided by the aforementioned King, by the advice of the Lord Edward and the aforenamed trusty lieges, that no Jew hereafter may sell his debt, unless he have first obtained licence of the King. And if a Christian purchase it by license of the King, let him have no more thereof than the King would have it the debt were in his hand; that is to say, the chattel that is found in the charter, without interest.[229]

The ageing king increasingly fell under the influence of his son Edward, who had a great dislike for the Jews, and it is therefore not surprising that just two years later, in 1271, the 55th year of Henry III's reign, a comprehensive law against the Jews was passed.

At the beginning we find a preamble,[230] so to speak, in which the populace's plight being caused by the Jews is given as the justification for the publication of the regulations:

> Know that for the honour of God and the Catholic Church, the better ordering and increased prosperity of our land, and the relief of the Christians from the losses and burdens, which they have sustained by reason of the freeholds which the Jews of our realm claimed to have in lands, tenements, fees, rents and other tenures; and lest mischief should grow therefrom in future to Us, or the people our realm, or the realm itself…

Firstly, it was ordained that from that point onwards 'no Jew do have a freehold in manors, lands, tenements, fees, rents or tenures of any kind whatsoever by charter, grant, feoffment, confirmation, or any other kind of obligation, or in any other manner'. However, the Jews were allowed to continue to dwell in the houses in which they presently lived, and if they had houses to let, 'they may lawfully let them to Jews alone, and not to Christians'. Under no circumstances was it permitted for Jews to purchase new houses in the future. In addition, the law once again made clear, in great detail, that they could neither buy free property nor have it mortgaged.

In the penultimate paragraph there also was a reiteration, with additional detail, of one of Henry III's earlier prohibitions, which featured in his ordinance of 1253:

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229 *Red Book of the Exchequer*, Vol. III, p. 978. Translator's note: This law has been reproduced in full for reader interest, with the English translation taken verbatim from Rigg: *Select Pleas…*, pp. xlix-li, as Aldag's original source is in Norman French only. This law, by returning the land to its rightful owners or stewards, may usefully be considered a permanent version of the biblical debt jubilee. Note also the final two paragraphs, evidently intended to prevent powerful Christians and Christian institutions (e.g. grandees and monasteries), from being able to use Jews as middlemen to get hold of coveted land, or to extort their Christian neighbours without the risk of obvious accusations of usury.

230 *Rymer's Fœdera*, Vol. I, p. 489; *Liber de Antiquis Legibus*, Appendix, p. 234. Translator's note: For the full 1271 mandate, both in the original Latin and in English translation, see Rigg: *Select Pleas…* pp. l-liv. All quotations and quoted elements taken from this latter source.

> Touching persons in the employ of Jews as nurses of children, bakers, brewers, and cooks, since Jews and Christians differ in faith, We have provided and decreed, that no Christian man or woman presume to serve them in the said offices.

Immediately afterwards, the Jews were tallaged around £4,500 to enable Crown Prince Edward to go on Crusade. However, they only raised two thirds of the requested sum, the rest being paid by the Earl of Cornwall. As security for his loan, he received the free use of all Jews for a year. He died in 1272 before his claim expired. The Jews thus reverted back to being property of the king, who imposed on them a new tallage of around £3,600. A short time later he too entered into his eternal rest.[231]

231 *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii*, Vol. I, p. 400 ff.; *Rymer's Fœdera*, Vol. I, p. 409.

Edward I in the Fight Against Usury

After Henry III's death in 1272, his son Edward I ascended the throne *in absentia*, being on Crusade and not returning to England for his coronation until 1274.[232] It would appear that nothing of importance happened during his absence, as far as the Jews were concerned. However, before we go into the years that followed, it would be instructive to dwell for a moment on Edward's character and his attitude towards the Hebrews.

Edward I was the ideal king. He demanded nothing for himself, but subordinated his own wishes entirely to those of the nation.[233] He was full of great plans, and was particularly keen to improve the impoverished lives of his people. His vision for the country was firmly fixed on the future. In order to achieve great goals for his country, he was ready to give up short-term advantages. He was also a pious man and tried to be a faithful son of the church. He enjoyed the goodwill of the common people and the lower nobility, groups who were particularly indebted to the Jews. The English people hoped that he would take measures against the Jews.

They did not have to wait too long for this, because immediately after his return Edward decided to tackle the problems that concerned him.

First of all, he needed a sound financial base from which to act. He did not want to create this by unilaterally using parts of the national wealth – as his ancestors had – but rather by harnessing the entire strength of the nation. He sought to achieve this through a strict feudal system. For this, however, it was necessary that as much land as possible in England was held in fiefdom [in fee] by the retainer for the overlord. At that time, however, there were considerable areas of land owned by monasteries or other spiritual corporations that were considered non-transferrable and therefore unavailable to the feudal system. Edward hoped to fundamentally change this situation in the future in favour of the Crown, which he did with a law in 1279 [the Statute of Mortmain]. But the Jews still stood in the way of him achieving his goal: as soon as land was pledged to them, they took all the proceeds from it, and the king only received a fraction of what he would otherwise have been entitled to under the feudal system.[234] In addition, it often happened that they gave up their rights to use the land pledged to them by monasteries in return for a certain sum.[235] This land was no longer covered by the feudal system, but even if it did fall under it in principle, it was impossible for those entitled to it, even with the best of intentions, to fulfil their obligations as retainers when they were also burdened with paying usurious interest. Since in such cases they could always count on their master to be more understanding of their economic situation than on the Jews, the former often came up short in his demands. This was found to be the standard situation for the time, with property mortgaged to an unprecedented extent.[236]

The king, apart from his own interests in the feudal system, was deeply troubled by the people's indebtedness. The church was also still completely in debt. The situation had already reached an untenable level by the 12th century (as has been shown in previous chapters), and things had only gotten worse since then. The well-known chronicler Matthew Paris once observed that

232 Margoliouth: *History*, Vol. I, p. 239. Translator’s note: Margoliouth reports that the country remained in the hands of the Archbishop of York, and the Earls of Cornwall and Chester during this interim period, and that life appears to have gone on peacefully and without remarkable incident.
233 Abrahams, p. 28.
234 *Rotuli Curiae Regis*, Vol. II, p. 62.
235 *Chronica Monasterii De Melsa*, Vol. I, pp. 173, 174, 306, 367; Vol. II. p. 116.
236 *Patent Rolls*, Vol, 1281-1292, p. 25; Madox: *Exchequer*: Vol. I, p. 227.

there was scarcely a person in all of England, especially the figure of the bishop, who was not entangled in the usurer's net.[237] When the latterly famous John of Peckham travelled to Canterbury, he found that the cathedral had fallen into dilapidation because there was no money for repairs. All available funds were used to pay the loan interest.[238] Glastonbury Abbey had such enormous debts that when the budget was reorganised, the exact number of meals the abbot would be served in his private rooms had to be calculated. Urgent savings to pay off usurious debts made this necessary.[239] The Bishop of Norwich no longer had the money for basic maintenance. He therefore had to borrow £480 from the Archbishop of Canterbury.[240] Newton's church was unable to retain a clergyman due to lack of funds.[241] The Prior of Lewes asked permission to rent out the church for secular use in order to pay his pressing debts.[242] In some cases the indebted monks helped themselves by ruthlessly cutting down the forests belonging to the monasteries and turning the timber into money.[243] The priory of St. Swithun in Winchester, which was otherwise rich in natural products and income, was also constantly in huge debt.[244] The Bishop of Hereford even had to seek an intervention from King Henry III in order to obtain a moratorium from the Jews.[245]

Similar conditions had also taken hold among the barons, which was why one of the most important points of Edward's programme was to free his people from the shackles of usury.

In addition, the king was no longer dependent on financial assistance from the Jews. His father's heavy taxation of the English Jewry had greatly diminished their wealth and as a consequence, the royal income from this group had declined considerably.

The king's income had increased from around £35,000 to around £65,000 in later decades, but this was not due to the Jews, but rather to other sources of income. The value of the Jewish tallages had not only decreased relative to the king's income, but were also lower in absolute terms.[246]

Furthermore, the importance of Jews in the money market had also declined sharply. In 1235, Italian merchants and bankers called Caursini [also known as Cahorsins] came to England from Florence, Milan, Rome, and other Italian cities. They enjoyed the special protection of the Pope, who even concluded treaties with kings that obliged them to make use of these bankers.[247] The Caursini were undoubtedly as astute in banking as the Jews. In the course of his diatribe against the Caursini, the chronicler Matthew Paris tells us of the perfect 'Christian' loan agreements that these Italian bankers set up when they disbursed funds.[248]

As Christians, they were not permitted by canon law to charge interest. On the other hand, of course, they wanted to make a profit from lending money. So they covered themselves by explicitly declaring that they would lend the money without interest. Now, if someone wanted a loan of £100 for six months, they agreed in a contract that the borrowed money would need to be returned within a period of three months. However, if the amount was not repaid within this timeframe, the lender

237 *Chronica Majora,* Vol. III, p. 328; Vol. V, p. 189. Translator's note: It should be noted that Matthew Paris's observation, which comes from Vol. III and corresponds to the year 1235, was in reference to the Caursini.
238 *Letters of John of Peckham*, Vol. I, p. 203.
239 *Letters of John of Peckham*, Vol. I, p. 261.
240 *Letters of John of Peckham*, Vol. I, pp. 177, 187.
241 *Letters of John of Peckham*, Vol. I, p. 194.
242 *Letters of John of Peckham*, Vol. I, p. 380.
243 *Letters of John of Peckham*, Vol. I, p. 244.
244 *Obedientiary Rolls of St. Swithins*, pp. 10, 18.
245 *Excerpta e Rotulis Finium*, Vol. II, p. 68.
246 *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. V, p. 165.
247 Abrahams: *Expulsion*, pp. 35-6.
248 *Historia Minora*, Vol. III, p. 272; *Chronica Majora*, Vol. III, p. 328.

would have to be paid some kind of compensation for not receiving the money back on time. This supposed ‘compensation for damages’ sometimes amounted to up to 50% and practically represented interest. These bankers from Italy soon became significant commercial rivals to the Jews, although the latter, enjoying the king’s significant protection, capitalised on certain existing advantages such as the enforcement measures of the Jewish Exchequer. The Caursini likewise soon garnered the hatred of the population. King Henry III had already considered expelling them from the kingdom, but he feared the power of the Pope, their protector and sponsor, and therefore refrained from doing so.[249] This is yet another example of the Catholic Church’s policy of not only tolerating the circumvention of its laws, but even sometimes encouraging it.

The Jewish historians are of the opinion that Edward relied solely on the financial help of the Caursini, which meant that he no longer needed the Jews, who now became his beleaguered victims.[250]

But they overlook and forget to mention that the Caursini also became ‘victims of the king’ the moment they charged usurious interest. Edward's measures were aimed indiscriminately against the usury from which his people had suffered so greatly. As a devout Christian, he could not countenance lightly setting aside the religious behests conferred on him, nor by any means bypassing them, as was done daily by the head of the Catholic Church itself, the Pope, even if this was to the detriment of the very Christendom he shepherded.

Edward’s zeal was particularly seen when the 1274 Second Council of Lyons called out the ever-greater problem of usury.[251] It may well be that the Pope at the time, Gregory X, was more sincere than his predecessor and truly wanted to fight usury when, as a result of the Council, he issued an edict banning all Christians from permitting usurers as tenants or residents on their land, with those already in that situation to be expelled within three months. Whatever the case was regarding the Pope, Edward was certainly determined with all his heart to put an end to usury in his kingdom. It is therefore unsurprising that by 1275, in obedience to the Pope’s decree, Edward had ordered an inquiry to be made into the usury of the Italian bankers in his realm, with a view to its suppression.[252]

It also appears that court hearings against the Caursini must have taken place in June 1275, January 1276 and July 1281, because according to available reports, a pardon was granted to them on condition that they no longer engaged in usurious practices.[253] It can be seen from the fact that, when it came to people who took usurious interest from his subjects, Edward punished the miscreants equally, regardless of race or religion. This fact undermines the commonly believed assertion that only the poor Jews were made to suffer at the hands of this ‘barbaric Edward’ and that all of his actions were dictated by a blind hatred towards them as a people.

However, it is correct to state that he flatly rejected association with Jews. He was influenced in this by his mother and in no small measure by the despicable incident in Oxford in 1268, which likely marked him for life. Despite everything, as his subsequent actions clearly show, he tried to

249 Hyamson: *History*, p. 73, 74.
250 See, among others, Hyamson: *History*, p. 73, 77; Abrahams, p. 36; Margoliouth: History, p. Vol. I, p. 241 ff.
251 Abrahams: *Expulsion*, p. 34. Translator’s note: As Abrahams explains, although Popes and Councils had declared usury accursed, churches and monasteries still had usurers as tenants on their estates, and sometimes even had whole ghettos as their property.
252 B. B.: Appendix. 13, Nr. 18 [?]; *Rymer’s Fœdera*, Vol. I, Part 2, p. 539.
253 *Patent Rolls*, Vol. 1272-1281, pp. 92, 93, 95, 128, 448; *Calendarum Rotulum Patentium*, p. 46 ff.

use special legislation to encourage the Jews to live a life that was tolerable for the people and the realm. We shall see to what extent he was successful in this aim.

The relevant law was called the *Statute de la Jeuerie* or the *Statute de Judaismo*.[254] It is extremely important and we shall therefore discuss it in detail.

The statute begins by explaining why Edward considered the prohibition of usury to be necessary, before following with the prohibition itself:

> Forasmuch as the King hath seen that divers Evils, and the disinheriting of the good Men of his Land have happened by the Usuries which the Jews have made in Time past, and that divers Sins have followed thereupon; albeit he and his Ancestors have received much benefit from the Jewish People in all time past; nevertheless for the Honour of God and the common benefit of the People, the King hath ordained and established, That from henceforth no Jew shall lend any Thing at Usury, either upon Land, or upon Rent, or upon other Thing; And that no Usuries shall run in Time coming from the Feast of Saint Edward [i.e. October 13th] last past. Notwithstanding, the Covenants before made shall be observed, saving that the Usuries shall cease [i.e. loans prior to this date will be legally binding, but only for the original capital borrowed].

Edward went on to order that all loans backed by pledges of moveable assets had to be settled by Easter, or these assets would be forfeited. He then made the following statement:

> And if any Jew shall lend at Usury contrary to this Ordinance, the King will not lend his Aid, neither by himself nor his Officers, for the recovering of his Loan; but will punish him at his discretion for the Offence, and will do justice to the Christian that he may obtain his Pledge again.

In making this statement, Edward had abandoned the policy of his ancestors, a policy that was more than two hundred years old. This break with the past was to benefit the people, but came at a cost to the Jews and the monarchy itself. From that point onwards, he as a monarch had to deal with the reality of no longer receiving any significant income from the Jews.

In pursuit of his anti-usury principle, Edward then ordered that the indebted English subject be given every protection against the ruthless exactions of the Jews:

> And that the Distresses for Debts due unto the Jews from henceforth shall not be so grievous, but that, the Moiety of the Lands and Chattels of the Christians shall remain for their Maintenance; and that no Distress shall be made for a Jewry Debt, upon the

254 *Statutes of the Realm*, Vol. I, p. 221; *Chronicle of Edward I und Edward II*, Vol. I, p. 96; *Florentii Wigorniens*, Vol. II. p. 214. Translator's note: It is commonly translated as 'Statute of the Jewry', but 'Statute of Jewry' or 'Statutes of Jewry' can also be found in English historical and academic texts. All English quotations of this Statute have been taken from pages 220-1 of the first volume of *The Statutes of the Realm* (1810), where the English translation is printed alongside the original Norman French.

> Heir of the Debtor named in the Jew's Deed, nor upon any other Person holding the Land that was the Debtor's, before that the Debt be put in Suit and allowed in Court.

Numerous protective measures are provided for this eventuality:

> And if the Sheriff or other Bailiff, by the King's Command hath to give Seisin [possession] to a Jew, be it one or more, for their Debt, of Chattels or Land to the Value of the Debt, the Chattels shall be valued by the Oaths of good Men, and be delivered to the Jew or Jews, or to their Proxy, to the Amount of the Debt; and if the Chattels be not sufficient, the Lands shall be extended by the same Oath before the Delivery of Seisin to the Jew or Jews, to each in his due Proportion; so that it may be certainly known that the Debt is quit, and the Christian may have his Land again; Saving always to the Christian the Moiety of his Land and Chattels for his maintenance as aforesaid, and the Chief Mansion.

A review shows that this part of the law appears to be quite modern and is in a certain sense similar to our *Vollstreckungsschutzgesetz* [enforcement protection law].

The Jews were once again required to reside only in cities where the aforementioned *archae* were located.

It was also once more stipulated that all Jews over the age of seven had to wear the specifically designated badge on his outer clothing, which took the form of a six-by-three-inch patch of yellow felt in the shape of the two tablets of Moses [note the colour change to yellow, from the white of the 1218 law]. And on turning 13 years of age, every Jew, regardless of sex, had to pay an annual poll tax of three pennies.

These regulations were intended to regulate the life of the Jews within the national body in a very specific way; indeed, with regard to the prohibition on usury and their dominance in this field, one can say that they had to completely change their ways. Now the efforts of this great English king, which were hopeless from the outset, were conceptualised in a bid to improve the character of the Jews in his kingdom. Through the issuance of legal regulations, he wanted to take away from the Jews the detestable profession of usurer, which is so detrimental to the people, and in its stead create a new, better existence for the Hebrews. But the king did not take into account the true character of the Jews. Because, for a person to improve himself, a sincere will of his own to want the change is required, and this has always been lacking among the Jews as a nation.

In the middle of his 1275 statute, the king gives the reason for his merciful stance, and sets out other reasonable protections for their right to thrive and prosper:

> And, Forasmuch as it is the will and sufferance of Holy Church, that they may live and be preserved, the King taketh them under his Protection, and granteth them his Peace; and willeth that they be safely preserved and defended by his Sheriffs and other Bailiffs, and by his Liege Men; and commandeth that none shall do them harm, or damage, or wrong, in their Bodies or in their Goods, moveable or immoveable; and that they shall

> neither plead nor be impleaded in any Court, nor be challenged or troubled in any Court, except in the Court of the King, whose Bond-men they are. And that none shall owe Obedience, or Service, or Rent, except to the King, or his Bailiffs in his Name; unless it be for their Dwellings which they now hold by paying Rent; saving the Right of Holy Church.
>
> AND the King granteth unto them that they may gain their living by lawful Merchandise and their Labour; and that they may have Intercourse with Christians, in order to carry on lawful Trade by selling and buying. But that no Christian, for this Cause or any other, shall dwell among them. And the King willeth that they shall not by reason of their Merchandise be put to Lot or Scot ['Scot and Lot': local household taxes], nor [be considered] in Taxes with the Men of the Cities or Boroughs where they abide; for that they are taxable to the King as his Bondmen, and to none other but the King.

The extent to which the king has concern for his Jewish subjects can be seen from the last paragraph of the law:

> Moreover the King granteth unto them that they may buy Houses and Curtilages [i.e. the accompanying enclosed land and outhouses], in the Cities and Boroughs where they abide, so that they hold them in chief of the King; saving unto the Lords of the Fee their Services due and accustomed. And that they may take and buy Farms or Land for the Term of Ten Years or less, without taking Homages or Fealties, or such sort of Obedience from Christians, and without having Advowsons of Churches; and that they may be able to gain their living in the World, if they have not the Means of Trading, or cannot Labour; and this Licence to take Lands to farm shall endure to them only for Fifteen Years from this Time forward.

The law did not change anything regarding the Jews' legal relationship to the king. They remained his property and as a result, despite having received express authorisation to trade, etc., could not become burgesses [i.e. freemen] of the cities. At the same time, it was determined that they were not liable to pay taxes to the cities, but only to the king.

We will turn our attention onto whether or not the Jews made use of the opportunities that were given to them for an honourable profession. To put it bluntly: all of Edward I's efforts were in vain. The Jewish historians take great pains to prove in great detail that for various reasons the Jews were unable to make use of the king's benevolence and were thus driven to crime.

It is most notably Barnett Lionel Abrahams[255] who has most ably attempted to provide this proof. Since he is generally the source for the other historians,[256] we will deal solely with his argument in order to make our own case.

Abrahams argues that it was impossible for Jews to engage in honest trade because the law prevented them from becoming burgesses [i.e. freemen] of a municipality. As a result, they were

255 Abrahams, p. 39 ff.
256 See, for example, Hyamson: *History*, p. 80.

excluded from the so-called guilds and therefore from the merchant community, for which membership of a particular guild was a prerequisite.

This argument cannot be accepted for various reasons.

In order to refute it, it is necessary to briefly discuss the legal nature of the guilds or, as they were also called, *Gilda Mercatoria*.

William the Conqueror not only brought orderly conditions to England, but trade and commerce also improved, closely linked to this new order of things. This led to the formation of guilds at the end of the 11th century, which were granted a range of special privileges by the king.[257]

It is difficult to find a general definition for the most recurring special rights of the guilds, since the latter almost never agree in their practical use of them. Charles Gross undertook to carefully compile the royal charters for each individual guild.[258] From his study it was found that, in general, the members of a guild were free from municipal taxes and had a monopoly on a large part of the retail trade. However, almost nowhere was it forbidden to engage in wholesale trade without belonging to the guild;[259] in fact, in various places on market days, strangers were usually allowed to sell goods on a small scale, and additionally, in some cities the monopoly in retail trade was only limited to products that were particularly important for urban traffic, such as furs, wool and dyed cloth.

A wide range of commercial activities was still available to non-guild members, and as a result the Jews had great opportunities to develop business interests. The Jews already enjoyed the other fundamental advantage over guild members – freedom from municipal taxes – because under the aforementioned 1275 law, they were only liable to pay taxes to the king and not to the cities.

It can thus be seen that the guild members had little advantage over the Jews. With sufficient determination, the latter were easily able to make a decent living for themselves.

Furthermore, we do not at all share Abrahams' view that the Jews could not become guild members because the 1275 law made it impossible for them to acquire burgess status in the cities.

Gross has now also shown that the guilds were not identical to the municipal governments, but rather only an important organ of the city administration.[260] From this, he has convincingly demonstrated that one could become a guild member without being a burgess of the city,[261] and his argument is perfectly substantiated with documents.[262] Accordingly, numerous people from neighbouring towns, even complete strangers, were guild members in cities without possessing burgess status. Given these facts, Jews also had the opportunity to join the guilds. There is even a recorded case of a Jew becoming the member of a guild in 1268. This proves that if they had serious intentions the Jews were fully equal with the English in commerce.

Incidentally, Abrahams' statements would be understood by an unwitting reader to mean that there were guilds all over England, which left nowhere for the Jews to trade.

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257 Gross: *Gilda Mercatoria*, p. 32. Translator’s note: For his first assertion, Gross in his *Gild Merchant*. (p. 2). cites the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: ‘Among other things, is not to be forgotten the good peace that he (William the Conqueror) made in the land. It was such that a man… might go over the kingdom unhurt with his bosom full of gold.’

258 Gross: *Gild Merchant*, Vol. I, p. 37 ff.; Vol. II, p. 16, 52, 110, 138, 175, 250, 358 etc.

259 Gross: *Gild Merchant*, Vol. I, p. 43 ff.; *Gilda Mercatoria*, pp. 54-5. Rigg (p. xi) also supports this view.

260 Gross: *Gild Merchant*, Vol. I, pp. 36 ff.; 63, 64.

261 Gross: *Gild Merchant*, Vol. I, p. 66 ff.; *Gilda Mercatoria*, p. 56 ff.

262 Ochenkowski (p. 57) is of the same view.

Undoubtedly, there was not a single guild in the countryside, and likewise not all urban centres possessed a guild, only those that had received this privilege from the king. Again, it is thanks to Gross's research that we have a list of the towns and cities with guilds, but it only contains around 100 locations.[263] The towns of Arundel, Colchester, Exeter, Huntingdon, Warwick and others are missing.[264] These are only selected from the number of non-guild cities because there were Jewish communities residing in them.[265]

Even if Abrahams' argument were correct, there would still be enough places in England where the kingdom's 16,000 Jews[266] could have traded.

But his view is all the more astonishing given that he used documents to establish that the Jews actually did trade. He undertook an in-depth study of the documents in the Public Record Office and the British Museum to determine what lines of commerce were available to the Jews when they were expelled from England in 1290. The facts he published on the topic should easily confirm that the Jews enjoyed a good wholesale trade, mainly in grain and wool, which they could do even without joining the guilds.[267] From his lists it emerges that the Jews in Bristol, Lincoln, Norwich, Oxford, but especially in Canterbury and Southampton,[268] carried on a profitable trade in the above-mentioned commodities. And it is safe to say that much if not most of the documentation will have been lost, to which must be added the fact that some transactions will have taken place without being documented.

In any case, there can be no doubt that the Jews could have pursued honourable trade without any difficulty.

Abrahams further explains that there was little chance for the Jews to be able to make a living for themselves in agriculture, which was also granted to them under Edward's legislation.[269] They were without any experience in this sphere of production, and in particular they were unable to acquire any land because the oath of fealty had a Christian character, and as a result could not be taken by them. Abrahams is referring to an oath that ends with the words: 'So help me God and the Saints.' This version of the oath precluded Jews from being able to swear it. However, by looking at the passage quoted by Abrahams, it emerges that this oath could not have been enacted in law before the Jews' expulsion of 1290, which is fundamentally necessary for Abrahams to be able to use it as a valid argument. On the contrary, our own research showed that it was only introduced much later.

In the source book *Liber Custumarum* cited by Abrahams, from pages 88-239 there are only laws after the year 1297, with one exception; most of them even date from after 1300. The aforementioned oath is recorded on page 215 of the collection, and is reproduced without specifying

263 Gross: *Gild Merchant*, Vol. I, p. 9 ff.; *Gilda Mercatoria*, p. 37 ff.
264 Gross: *Gild Merchant*, Vol. I, p. 20; *Gilda Mercatoria*, p. 39.
265 Jacobs, pp. 373-385.
266 Abrahams, *Expulsion*, p. 39.
267 Abrahams: *Conditions of the Jews*, p. 85 ff.
268 Abrahams: *Conditions of the Jews*, p. 87 ff.
269 Abrahams: *Expulsion*, p. 40. Translator's note: Abrahams, of course, omit to mention the fact that, under classical Judaism from 800 A.D. onwards, in which the Babylonian Talmud is the acknowledged authority in all Jewish communities, the Jews 'developed a hatred and contempt for agriculture as an occupation and for peasants as a class, even more than for other Gentiles' and wherever Jewish society is to be found, in whatever form, 'it does not include peasants'. See Shahak, pp. 42, 53 [Translator's Bibliography]. Additionally, Edward I was not the only monarch to attempt (and fail) to get the Jews to give up parasitical financial functions in favour of honest labour – Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *Two Hundred Years Together* chronicles the failures of successive Tsars to turn the Jews into farmers [e.g. Vol I, Chapter 4].

the date of the documentation in which it was found. The law preceding the oath entry is from the year 1306; the one following it is from the year 1303. It is thus almost certain that the ordinance regarding the oath was also issued after the year 1300.

We have also discovered the aforementioned oath in another official collection of statutes.[270] The accompanying footnote expressly states that this legal provision was enacted by Edward II in his 17th regnal year [i.e. 1323-1324].

Both sources would indicate that the oath cited by Abrahams was only introduced long after the Jews had been expelled and could therefore not have represented an obstacle for them around the year 1276. As a result, there is no apparent reason why the Jews should not have sought a living in agriculture. The real reason, then as now, is likely to be that they had not the slightest inclination to put their hand to the plough; which would have been a welcome event, because it is only through a genuine peasantry that a nation finds its true source and regeneration.

Finally, Abrahams claims that there was no opportunity for Jews to become craftsmen.[271] To justify his claim, he refers again to the aforementioned collection of laws and customs,[272] from which he posits that there were special requirements for the craft professions. With the exception of two of the laws cited,[273] all of the laws also date to the time after the Jewish expulsion. These first two laws are only really concerned with the days on which work was not permitted and the materials from which certain products had to be made. One also stipulates that the apprenticeship period for saddlers should be ten years. Neither law deals with restrictions that made it impossible for Jews to join the trades. Incidentally, it appears that, apart from everything else, it was only after the year 1300 that legal regulations regarding qualifications for craftsmen were made; because, for example, no relevant instructions for London are to be found for this time,[274] but they have been found for later periods.[275] Furthermore, while it is not even certain that there were special guilds in all cities, it was definitely possible to practice a craft in the open countryside. In fact, the craftsmen who gathered around a large country estate received certain land for their craft services.[276] Apart from the difficulty of a certain number of years being required to master a craft profession, the Jews were also able to work as artisans.

We have somewhat lingered on this topic because historians have almost unanimously taken the view that Edward I's law deprived the Jews of any opportunity to make a living after they could no longer practice their former business of usury. These previous historical claims should now be seen as sufficiently debunked. It seems really strange that, according to these historians, a king like Edward I – who is not wrongly called ‘the English Justinian’ – should have passed a law that remained largely only on paper because certain circumstances supposedly made its practical implementation impossible.

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270 *The Statutes of the Realm* (1810), Vol. I. p. 227.
271 Abrahams: *Expulsion*, p. 40.
272 *Liber Custumarum*, pp. 78, 80-1, 101-2, 121, 124, 418-25. See also Riley, pp. 178-9.
273 *Liber Custumarum*, pp. 78, 101.
274 Riley, pp. 3-61.
275 Ochenkowski, p. 64.
276 Ochenkowski, p. 51 ff.

Judah Responds

It would soon become clear that the Jews did not have the slightest understanding of Edward I's efforts to make them honourable people. Rather, they saw everything as oppression. Although they did not dare to express their anger directly against the king, they nevertheless openly insulted the Christian religion. They claimed that Edward's law was against the principles of Christian doctrine: the same Christianity that the Jews allege is anti-Semitic at every other juncture, now had its doctrines receive an expedient Jewish interpretation for ethnic advantage. Thus, one can see how history repeats itself – only with the difference that today these Jewish interpretations of morality receive both applause and acceptance, especially in the Anglo-Saxon countries. In the England of the period, however, their argument apparently received very little attention. In their attacks, the Hebrews did not even stop at the person of Jesus Christ, and eventually their behaviour, 'which vilify'd our *Saviour*, and his Followers, with such scoffing *Blasphemy*', became so intolerable that the long-suffering king found himself obliged to put a stop to it by means of a special law of 1279 which meant that any Jew who dared to engage in such behaviour did so at a risk to life and limb ('*sub periculo Vitae & Membrorum'*).[277] In addition, Edward – apparently it had become necessary – once again strictly forbade Jews from employing Christian servants, whether male or female, and having them in their homes. It is striking that mention of this prohibition appears again and again throughout thirteenth-century records, which would indicate that certain critical incidents must have required its reiteration. However, the Jews did not stop at insults of the blasphemous kind mentioned. Rather, they resorted to actions that at times threatened the existence of the nation's administration, and one could even go as far to say the existence of the English economy.

First of all, it was clear that the Hebrews paid little attention to Edward's statute of 1275 and continued to lend money at interest, despite the risk of harsh punishment for doing so. Few of them thought of acting honourably.[278]

Most of them, and quite possibly all of them, resorted to the worst crimes.

Reports were made that they carried out highway robberies, committed burglaries and generally became a scourge on the country.[279] However, their main occupation still seems to have been to ruin the country's currency. They clipped or ground the edges of the gold and silver coins, and while they kept the metal thus obtained for themselves, they passed on the debased coins at full face value.

As early as 1248, it was mainly Jews who committed this crime, and only the harshest punishments were able to deter some of them. Indeed, the currency was so shaken by the problem of 'light coin' that foreign countries were loath to accept English money as payment, as reflected in the comment made by the monk Matthew Paris in his *Chronica Majora* that same year: 'No

277 Tovey, pp. 207-8; *Rymer's Foedera*, Vol. I, Part 2, p. 570. Margoliouth: *History*, Vol. I, p. 250. Translator's note: Quoted elements reproduced verbatim from Tovey. Note that the same legislation also contained a ruling which ordered that Jewish women had to wear the Jewish badge alongside the men. This came in response to a complaint of 'malicious defamation' made to the king in 1288 by a certain Moses of Hereford and his wife Suetecota, who were aggrieved that she had been slandered a Christian [Prynne, Vol. II, p. 106]. The complaint and the king's response not only illustrate the Jews' tone-deafness to the deteriorating conditions in England at this time, but to the fact that this sixty-year-old regulation, like other legal restrictions on Jews which had been in place for decades, had obviously become routinely ignored in practice, and thus required regular reiteration from authority.

278 Abrahams: *Expulsion*, p. 46 ff., Hyamson: *History*, p. 81.

279 *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, Vol. 1281-1292, p. 98; Abrahams: *Expulsion*, p. 46 ff.

foreigner, let alone Englishman, could look on an English coin with a dry eye and an unbroken heart.'[280]

Shortly after Edward I's 1275 law was passed, the same evils were discovered – at first only on a small scale, but then gradually worsening until it reached an unprecedented level. In 1278, Edward was therefore forced to make the decision to confiscate all of the currency in circulation and have new coins minted. But first, he had to work to arrest the coin-clippers, so that they would not be able to ruin the currency again.

From the beginning, Edward's suspicions fell on the Jews because of what had happened in 1248. During the course of investigations, it was found that the Jews were in fact almost the sole perpetrators. In addition to the crime of coin clipping, they had smuggled in counterfeit coins from abroad, which did not appear to differ from the real English coins, but which were in fact only half the weight.[281] It was found that the Hebrews had made a tremendous amount of profit from these activities, and had indulged in coin-tampering to such an extent that if it were to continue much longer, as one French manuscript noted, the English currency would soon be worth nothing.[282]

As soon as Edward I had enough evidence of the Jews' activities, he had them arrested throughout England one night in November 1278, and while the detainees were 'placed in safe custody in different castles throughout the country', their homes were carefully searched.[283] A great deal of devalued and counterfeit money was discovered, along with special tools and equipment for committing the crimes in question.[284]

Court hearings then took place in all parts of the kingdom, which revealed, among other things, that a few Englishmen were also involved, but that their participation was completely irrelevant compared to that of the Jews. Hundreds of Jews were sentenced to death. In London alone, 294 Jews were hanged or drowned, along with three Englishmen.[285] Tovey's commentary [p.210] is therefore vindicated when he says that King Edward 'was very jealous of every Thing that related to his Coin, (and is suppos'd to be the first of our Kings who fix'd the Standard of it)'.

This put an end to this crime, from which the Jews had not only derived great material profits, but which had also severely beleaguered the king whom they so hated.

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280 Tovey, p. 209-10. *Chronica Majora*, Vol. V, p. 15-16. Ruding, Vol. I, pp. 191-3. [English translation of Paris quotation taken from Abrahams: *Expulsion*, p. 47.]

281 *Annales Monastici*, Vol. IV, p. 278; Tovey, pp. 209-10; Ruding, Vol. I, pp. 191-3. Translator's note: As Tovey (p. 210) tell us, some of the counterfeit coins were 'an artificial Mixture of Silver, Copper and Sulpher', while others appear to have been 'base Mettal, plated or scaled over with Silver'.

282 Tovey, p. 209.

283 *Bartholomæi de Cotton*, p. 157; *Chronica Johannis de Oxenedes*, p. 253; *Chronica Monasterii S. Albani, Thomas Walsingham*, Vol. I, p. 18.

284 *Chronica Johannis de Oxenedes*, p. 252; *Annales Monastici*, Vol. II, p. 390; *Florentii Wigorniensis*, Vol. II, p. 220. Translator's note: Quoted element taken from Thomas Forester's 1854 translation of *Florentii Wigorniensis* [*Florence of Worcester*, p. 359, see Translator's Bibliography]. The same source also relates that goldsmiths were similarly arrested and their houses searched, which may explain the three Englishmen who were later hanged in London. According to the author 'B. B.', during the Jewish house searches 'several Barrels full of Clippings, above and under Ground, were Discovered, and all with the Clipping Instruments' [p. 8], while possession of silver plates and counterfeit silver plates (i.e. silvered base metal) was also seen as implication in the crime. See Rigg: *Select Pleas…* (pp. 120-1, 125-7) for cases of failed attempts by Jews to sell such silver plate.

285 Holinshed, Vol. III, p. 277 ff; Tovey, p. 210; Prynne, Vol. I, p. 32, Vol. II, p. 81; *Chronicles of Edward I*, Vol. I, p. 88; *Annales Monastici*, Vol. IV, pp. 278-9. Translator's note: Note that the number of the Jews executed in London varies according to source – for example, *Florence of Worcester* (p. 360) gives 267, Prynne (Vol. II, p. 81) 294, Tovey (p. 210) 280, and 'B. B.' (p. 8) 207, variances which can surely only be partly attributable to scribal copying errors. Note also that these figures refer solely to London; according to numerous sources, 'great numbers' (Tovey) were also executed in other parts of England. Cf. Rokéah: *Money and the hangman* [in Translator's Bibliography].

The Church Intervenes

One might have expected that the king would have been at best indifferent towards the fate of the Jews, given his bad experiences with them. But it is typical of his integrity that, in view of the people's outrage over these crimes, he passed special laws to protect the Jews. As before, he viewed them as his subjects and his property, and therefore forbade any harassment of them, as he similarly forbade any interference in their trade. Violations would result in punishment.[286] How serious he was about this can be seen from the fact that in individual cases he issued numerous special decrees, as can be seen, for example, with the burgesses of Hereford who had apparently not observed the king's order.[287]

But all the king's measures to pacify the masses were unsuccessful because the people were too angry at Jewish behaviour. One can therefore quite fairly conclude that it was the Jews themselves who contributed most to their own expulsion by means of their outrageous deeds, although there were other factors, such as Queen Eleanor's anti-Jewish stance, that must have played a role.[288] The great bitterness of the people can best be seen from contemporary reports. In 1250, Matthew Paris wrote that no-one pitied the Jews their fate [of having almost all of their money extorted from them by the king], 'as it was clearly proven that they were the ones who forged documents, seals and coins, crimes that needed greater punishment'.[289] Even those in educated circles almost unanimously shared the view of the common people.[290]

The church was significantly involved in the fight against the Jews. Leading clergymen had tried in every way to keep contact between Jews and Christians to the bare minimum.[291] The common people were still inhibited from freely expressing their feelings in public, because the king continued to protect the Jews in the hope that they might still improve as a people. However, he was only committed to this policy inasmuch as it could be reconciled to the overall welfare of society.

Gradually the church became more politically active against the Jews. The Archbishop of Canterbury, John of Peckham, demanded that all synagogues in London, with one exception, be shut down.[292] The Bishop of Hereford was utterly determined not to tolerate any intercourse between Jews and Christians. When he learned that Christians intended to be guests at an upcoming wedding celebration of rich Jews, he forbade their attendance under threat of excommunication. As a result, the English parishioners who disobeyed him were expelled from the church.

In 1286, the English church received external support in this regard. The Pope sent a bull to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in which he firmly opposed intercourse between Jews and Christians. If the church had previously tacitly tolerated such interaction, he condemned this laxity and demanded that it be stopped immediately. Furthermore, Christian wet nurses were to be removed from Jewish houses as quickly as possible, and the abuse of Christian men and women

286 Prynne, Vol. II, p. 85.
287 Prynne, Vol. II, p. 100. Translator's note: The king had charged 24 burgesses of Hereford with the Jews' protection, advising them that if any of his Jews were molested in their goods or persons, those responsible would have their assets seized. Prynne also advises us that the king employed a similar strategy in other towns throughout England.
288 *Annales Monastici*, Vol. II. p. 409. Translator's note: According to this chronicle (the Waverley Annals), it was Queen Eleanor who ordered the expulsion of the Jews from England.
289 *Historia Anglorum*, Vol. III, p. 76.
290 *Chronica Majora*, Vol. V, p. 517. Translator's note: This reference has to be incorrect, as it is Paris's account of the murder of Little St. Hugh of Lincoln in 1255, irrelevant here.
291 *Letters of Bishop Grosseteste*, pp. 33, 318.
292 *Johannes Peckham: Registrum Epistularum*, Vol. II, p. 407.

living under the same roof as Jews was to be ended. This was precisely why shameful things often happened in terms of Jewish men having sexual intercourse with Christian women and Christian men with Jewish women. He demanded that strict action be taken to resolve all aspects of the problem and a subsequent report drafted on the actions taken.[293]

That the Jews still did not follow the king's command to wear a badge is indicated by yet another reference to the existing legal requirement in a special ordinance.

In 1278, immediately after the Jews were tried for the coin crimes, Edward set about putting England's currency back in order. He gradually removed all of the damaged coins from circulation that could be found, and replaced them with new ones. He also set a point in time, announced by public proclamation, at which the old coins would no longer be legal tender. At the end of the same year, the replacement of the coinage was considered complete.[294]

In 1282 the king started to receive complaints about the new coins being devalued. Counterfeit coins were also starting to reappear in the new circulation. The king set up a commission of enquiry with a decree dated February 6th, 1283, and the investigators discovered that it was once more the work of the Jews.[295] The guilty were certainly punished, although nothing is known about how.

Apparently, however, all of the measures did not have the intended success in eradicating the problem, because the next year [September 15th, 1284] a new decree was issued for the commission to investigate and punish the Jews dealing in real and counterfeit silver plate, as made from coin clipping.[296]

Although hard to believe, even this new crackdown still did not produce the desired outcome. Some chroniclers speak of a general persecution of Jews in 1286 without, however, giving the reasons for it.[297] Still others relate that in 1287 all of the Jews were thrown into prison because they had committed new money crimes, and were only released after paying a fine of £12,000.[298]

However, this operation may not have been completed until 1288, because King Edward again issued a decree on January 26th, 1288, which indicated that the Jews were still active as coin clippers and counterfeiters [given that they were still buying and selling real and counterfeit silver plate]. As a result, the commissioners were ordered to take whatever action was deemed necessary to deal with the problem.[299]

Since 1286, the king had been in Gascony, then still an English possession, to carry out administrative reforms.[300] In 1288 he issued a decree for this part of his realm which ordered the Jews to leave the province immediately,[301] a decree which foreshadowed the measures which were to follow in England proper.

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293 *Richard de Swinfield*, Vol. II, pp. 100-1. Translator's note: This source has a short summary of the bull, lacking the detail given above, e.g. there is no mention of a report to be drafted, so Aldag may have used a second source.
294 Holinshed, Vol. III, pp 279-280.
295 Prynne, Vol. II, p. 102.
296 Prynne, Vol. II, p. 105. Translator's note: Prynne notes that this commission, as well as the trials, were made up of both Christians and Jews, 'for the greater indifferency, and prevention of Injustice through malice or emulation'. This is seen by the Jewish judge Solomon of Rochester being named among the commissioners.
297 *Chronica Johannis de Oxenedes*, p. 268.
298 *Florentii Wigorniensis*, Vol. II, p. 238. *Annales Monastici*, Vol. IV, p. 308. *Chronicles of Edward I*, Vol. I, p. 96.
299 Prynne, Vol. II, p. 106.
300 *Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*, Vol. II, p. 183.
301 *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii S. Albani*, Vol. II, p. 30.

The Expulsion of the Jews

When King Edward left Gascony for London in 1289,[302] he was determined to expel the Jews from England as he had just done from the French duchy. But once back home, he first had to deal with some very unpleasant business that demanded his urgent attention. He was informed that a significant number of the judges had been bribed during his three-year absence and that there was no longer any assurance of an impeccable jurisprudence. This had already had the most undesirable consequences, and he was urged from all sides to take action against the 'seven corrupted judges'. The Jews were also involved in these corruptions to a significant extent[303] – it would have been a miracle in Jewish history if this had not been the case. Edward immediately deposed the guilty judges, punished them and replaced them with new men as quickly as possible. All in all, the purge of the judiciary took him until the beginning of 1290.[304]

Immediately after this matter was settled, he turned to the Jewish Question. The barons and the clergy had already petitioned Parliament to expel the Jews from the country. Their proposal became law in July 1290, according to which the Jews had to leave England over the next few months.[305] Below is a contemporary report of the events which led up to this final decision:

> To the treasurer and barons of the exchequer. Whereas the king in his parliament at Westminster at the quinzaine of Michaelmas, in the third year of his reign, ordained that no Jew of the realm should thenceforth lend anything in usury to any Christian upon lands, rents or other things, but should earn his living by trade and labour, and the Jews afterwards, maliciously deliberating amongst themselves, changed the kind of usury into a worse one, which they called 'courtesy' (*curialitatem*), and depressed the king's people under colour of such, by an error double that of the previous one; wherefore the king, by reason of their errors and for the honour of Christ, has caused the Jews to leave his realm as perfidious men; the king, not wishing to be inconsistent with his previous ordinance, but rather to imitate it, has wholly annulled all manner of pains and usury and every sort thereof that may be exacted from any Christians of the realm for any reasons whatever by reason of Jewry for any times whatsoever, willing that nothing shall be exacted from the Christians except the principal debts that they received from the Jews [i.e. the capital only]; of which debts he wills that the amount shall be verified before the treasurer and barons by the oath of three Christians, and that they shall be then paid to the king at suitable terms to be appointed by the treasurer and barons.[306]

302 *Annales Monastici*, Vol. IV, p. 318; *Chronicles of Edward I*, Vol. I, p. 97.

303 'B. B.', p. 5. Translator's note: *Ibid:* 'by their Corruption and Briberies, most *Jews* escape Corporal Punishment; as it was Instanced by the Commitment and Judgement against seven Corrupted Judges, in the Reign of *Edward* I, who by their underhand Juggle with the *Jews*, and other foul Practices, were Discover'd and Committed to the *Fleet Prison*, where four of them paid Forty Thousand Marks Fine to the King, and more, besides Vessels of Gold and Silver, and the other three were Banished out of the Kingdom.' The author also cites his sources.

304 *Annales Monastici*, Vol. II, p. 408; Vol. III. p. 355, 356; Vol. IV, p. 319, 324; *Chronicles of Edward I*, Vol. I, p. 98; *Chronicles of Pierre de Langtoft*, Vol. II, pp. 184-5; *Flores Historiarum*, Vol. III, p. 70; Speed, p. 545.

305 *Chronica Johannis de Oxenedes*, p. 277; *Bartholomæi de Cotton*, p. 178; *Flores Historiarum*, Vol. III, p. 70; *Annales Monastici*, Vol. II, p. 409; Vol. III, pp. 361-2; Vol. IV, pp. 326, 503; *Chronicles of Edward I*, Vol. I, p. 99, *Chronicles of Pierre de Langtoft*, Vol. II, p. 186; *Gervase of Canterbury*, Vol. II, p. 296; *Le Livere de Reis de Britanie*, p. 308; *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii S. Albani*, Vol. II, p. 31; *Richard de Swinfield*, p. 101.

306 *Close Rolls of Edward I*, Vol. 1288-1296, p. 109. Translator's note: Quoted verbatim from original source. It is unclear what 'courtesy' is here, but it may have been a form of commodity futures (see Abrahams: *Condition*, p 80).

The content of this law clearly shows that the king was only ever prompted to take the actions he did because of the continual bad-faith behaviour of the Jews. How little they were willing to do justice to the people's demands in the last two years of their stay can be seen from the fact that in 1289 all the Jews in London had to be thrown into prison[307]and in 1290 a Jew even dared to publicly desecrate the host.[308]

The justification for the Edict of Expulsion also shows that, despite Edward's measures, usury must have continued to be a great problem. As a result, the living conditions of the common people were often horrifying, as some chroniclers inform us.[309] How far the exploitation of the people had gone under the reign of Edward I was best summarised by great historian John Speed, who said that the Jews 'by their cruel usuries had… eaten his [Edward's] people to the bones'.[310]

The Jews were ordered to leave England by November 1st of that year. Any Jew who was still in England after that date would be punished with death.[311] They basically had to leave their property behind in England. However, they were able to take a large part of their movable property and money with them, as long as it was necessary for the journey to their new destination. All of their claims on loans against the English were escheated to the king.[312] However, the wealth of the Jews was small compared to before and only amounted to around £10,000 in total.[313] This therefore invalidates the argument that the king had the expulsion declared by Parliament in order to take possession of the Jews' vast wealth.[314] Indeed, the Elizabethan historian Samuel Daniel wrote of Edward's 1290 Edict of Expulsion, which he saw as an act carried out for the benefit of the 'miserable People': 'the Justice of the Prince is more noted than any other Motive which may be for his Profit' (*Collection of the History of England*, p. 190).

Edward I must have had the (justifiable) expectation that the populace, in their antipathy towards the Jews, would seize the opportunity to enact their own vengeance on their enemies. He therefore issued a writ ordering that the Jews and their belongings were to be given every possible protection by the authorities.[315] The fact that these orders were not just on paper is evident from the fact that he imposed severe penalties for non-compliance, as can be seen from the following tragic case, when a large number of London Jews chartered a ship to take them to mainland Europe:

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307 *Chronicles of Edward I*, Vol. I, p. 97.

308 *Annales Monastici*, Vol. IV, p. 503. Translator's note: This refers to the infamous Paris 1290 case of host desecration/eucharistic miracle involving a Jewish moneylender, which, despite taking place abroad, would still have influenced English public opinion. A frank discussion on the facticity of medieval host desecration reports can be found in Horowitz, pp. 172-4 [Translator's Bibliography].

309 *Chronicon Domini Walteri.*.. Vol II, p. 20 ff.; Prynne, Vol. I, p. 40 ff.; Tovey, pp. 233-4; Daniel, p. 160. Translator's note: The Osney Annals [*Annales Monastici*, Vol IV, p. 327] reports of usury completely bankrupting people, reducing them to paupers who were forced to beg for food.

310 Speed, p. 545. Translator's note: Quotation reproduced verbatim from original source.

311 *Bartholomæi de Cotton*, p. 178. Translator's note: The Osney Annals [*Annales Monastici*, Vol IV, p. 327] affirms that death would be by hanging or beheading.

312 *Chronicles of Pierre de Langtoft*, Vol. II, p. 189; *Chronicon Domini Walteri*, Vol. II, p. 21. Translator's note: Prynne (Vol. I, p. 47), citing Holinshed, states that the king permitted the Jews to take all of their moveable property, including their gold and silver.

313 Abrahams: *Condition*, pp. 80-1. Translator's note: It should be noted that Abrahams bases his estimate on the extant *archae* records for 11 of the 17 towns in which the Jews resided, which total £9,100 (of which £4,000 is cash, the rest commodities), but appears to forget about the wealth of the six towns for which there are no records. This estimate also does not factor in the value of the Jews' own property, which he estimates is worth an additional £6,000. Nevertheless, these figures still represent a huge reduction in wealth when compared with the previous era.

314 For an example of this argument being used, see Margoliouth: *History*, Vol. I, p. 267 ff.

315 *Close Rolls*, Vol. 1283-1296, pp. 95-6; Tovey, p. 240 ff.; *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, Vol. 1281-1292, pp. 378, 381, 382; *Rymer's Fœdera*, Vol. I, Part II, p. 736; Prynne, p. 240.

> A sort of the richest of them being shipped with their Treasure in a mighty tall ship, which they had hired, when the same was under sail, and got down the *Thames* towards the mouth of the River beyond *Quinborow* [Queenborough]. The Master Mariner bethought him of a wile [came up with a devious trick]: and caused his men to cast anchor, and so rode at the same till the ship by ebbing of the stream remained on the dry sands. The Master herewith inticed the Jewes to walke out with him on land for recreation: and at length, when he understood the tyde to be coming in, he got himself back to the ship, whither he was drawn by a cord. The Jews made not so much haste as he did, because they were not aware of the danger. But when they perceived how the matter stood, they cryed to him for help, Howbeit he told them, that they ought to cry rather unto *Moses*, by whose conduct their Fathers passed through the red Sea, and therefore if they would call to him for help, he was able enough to help them out of these raging flouds, which now came in upon them: They cryed indeed, but no succour appeared, and so they were swallowed up in the water. The Master returned with the ship, and told the King how he had used the matter, and had both thanks and reward, as some have written. But others affirm, (and more truly as should seem) that diverse of those Marriners which dealt so wickedly against the Jews, were hanged for their wicked practise, and so received a just reward of their fraudulent and mischievous dealing.[316]

In the 1293 Close Rolls we find an order to deliver a man for trial who had been in Sandwich prison for two years for failing to comply with the royal protection order regarding the Jews.[317]

The number of Jews who left England has been estimated at 15,000 to 16,000.[318] They went mainly to France, Holland and Belgium. Thus ended the Jews' first settlement in England.

The history of these approximately 200 years has clearly demonstrated that the Jews, with or without the protection of the authorities, were never willing to take up an honourable profession, and that the laws essentially intended to force them to do so were also unsuccessful.

In good times and bad, they committed the greatest crimes, and despite the harshest punishments, continued to do so until the king was forced to expel them in the interest of the people and the maintenance of law and order. All in all, another comment on modern times. Even then, it was the Jews with their shameful activities who, in violation of the hospitality granted to them, gradually forced the people and ultimately a great and just king to take action against them. So it was not a question of a nation's evil will to persecute poor, wandering Jews, but rather a healthy people with strong natural instincts, who took measures that were needed to maintain the purity of their customs and their decency. In other words, it was the Jews alone who brought about their expulsion.

Will the English people of today still have the strength to manage a feat similar to the one achieved by their vigorous ancestors under the leadership of their king?

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316 *Chronicon Domini Walteri*, Vol. II, pp. 21-2; *Annales Monastici*, Vol. III, p. 262; Vol. IV, p. 327; Prynne, p. 48. Translator's note: The quotation inserted here for reader interest has been reproduced verbatim from Prynne, with some spellings updated for comprehension. The Latin sources confirm that the sailors involved were hanged.

317 *Close Rolls*, Vol. 1288-1296, p. 295. Translator's note: Given that this man, Henry Adrian, is in a Cinque Ports prison, and is charged with causing the death of Jews and committing trespasses against them 'in their passage to parts beyond the sea by him' outside of port jurisdiction, it may be that he was the ship captain of Prynne's tale.

318 Prynne, Vol. I. p. 49; *Flores Historiarum*, Vol. III, 70; B. B., p. 11. Translator's note: Prynne rather implausibly gives the exact figure of 15,060 for the number of Jews who were expelled, while 'B. B.' gives that of 16,511.

Translator's Appendix I: A Pathologist's Verdict on William of Norwich

Below is a most singular and controversial article from the *New York State Journal of Medicine*, November 1st, 1971 (pp. 2569-2574). The text has been reproduced exactly as it was published (*sans* the magazine formatting), with the author's endnote references being combined with his two asterisked footnotes into a new set of footnotes. This new set of footnotes include additional comments, clearly marked as such, which have been inserted for reader convenience.

Strange Murder of William of Norwich, 1144

Medicolegal analysis of Thomas of Monmouth, De Vita et Passione Sancti Willelmi Martyris Norwicensis

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After the Norman conquest, early twelfth-century Anglia's economy and living conditions approximated those of underdeveloped nations today, compounded by a wretched climate, marshy soil, cold winds from the North Sea, a short growing season, and government by a hated and alien race. Violence was common, and the ordinary serf went months without being either warm, dry, or free from hunger. Some celebrated event occasionally excited bleak and joyless lives. One such event is narrated by Thomas of Monmouth, the murder of a twelve- or thirteen-year-old Christian boy,[319] William, during Holy Week of 1144 in the Jewish quarter of Norwich.

A single manuscript account[320] survives in the Library of Cambridge University, copied before 1200 from a text which the editors date, on internal grounds, to 1172/1173, and which may have been copied from Thomas' holograph. We shall attempt to analyze this narrative to learn something of this murder, which contributed to the often-repeated charge of ritual murder of Christian children by Jews, and which influenced the final expulsion of Jews from England half a century before Chaucer.

Early Background

The century of turmoil following the Norman conquest saw considerable confusion in both criminal and civil jurisdiction, but generally a distinction was, and is, drawn between secret murder or murder by stealth and premeditation, and open homicide, for example, homicide during a family altercation or in the heat of passion. All the inhabitants of a ward ('hundred') shared in the fine

319 Translator's note: It is unclear why Sharpe indicates that William may be thirteen, when the evidence clearly points to him being twelve.

320 Codex Cantab. 3037, late twelfth century.

(murdrum) levied unless the inhabitants could produce the murderer, but certain nobles and all ecclesiastical foundations were exempted from this liability. Hence, discovered bodies which presumably had been murdered were not infrequently transported to another ward to transfer this financial liability, and desire to avoid participation in this fine could induce a man who discovered a body to go his way and to say nothing.

This was not because of any desire to be what we would now call an accessory after the fact, but because, as the law then stood, only near blood relations of a murdered man could initiate prosecution in cases of secret murder, whereas in cases of open homicide anyone connected with the dead man by blood, lordship, or homage could do so. Hence the discoverer in his own ward of a presumably murdered body probably not only could not initiate criminal prosecution but also would run a very substantial risk of sharing in the fine assessed were the murderer not identified. Human nature being what it is and reporting the crime being apt to do financial harm without doing much good by way of apprehension and conviction of the murderer, the temptation to move the body or to ignore the crime might prove overwhelming. The risk of subsequent prosecution, if the defendant were acquitted, or of violence from his family whatever the outcome, was real, and apparently it was only on the king's highways or on the king's lands that murder was then specifically a breach of the king's peace. The law still regarded murder as an offense against the individual, not against the crown or commonwealth.

The first Jews arrived in Norwich about 1086, and a Jewish massacre at Rouen in 1096 fostered further immigration. By 1144, they formed a small, distinct, and apparently prosperous community at Norwich, doubtless bitterly envied by the dispossessed Saxons and less prosperous Normans. Jews had a special relationship to the king as 'royal chattels' and could call on the county sheriff for protection. Jews were limited in their livelihoods to trade and had almost a monopoly on money lending and on the primitive banking then available. Other careers were closed to them, if only because entry into almost all trades, crafts, guilds, and professions involved participation in a religious ceremony which invoked the name of the Trinity. Interest rates were high, and risks of lending money were great; a Christian debtor often stood to gain by a Jewish creditor's death; and the king regularly claimed one part in three of a dead Jew's estate and might claim all. Church officials were not only habitually anti-Semitic and fond of dark homiletic allusions to nameless Jewish rites but almost always were also deeply in debt to Jews, who alone could provide the capital needed for their fashionable building programs.

Very little is known about William's life; he had no surname. He was born on Candlemas Day, February 2, 1132, probably at Haveringland, Norfolk County, of Saxon parents in moderate circumstances. His father, Wenstan, died when William was small, and his mother Elviva (or Elvira) raised him and taught him to read and write. His maternal grandfather was a priest. Most priests and many bishops then were married men. His maternal aunt, Liviva, was married to the priest Godwin Sturt, whose son Alexander was already in deacon's orders and who may have inherited his father's parish in Norwich. At eight, William was apprenticed to a tanner and worked at that trade until his death some few months after his twelfth birthday. Were it not for various considerations which suggested the usefulness of a saint, preferably indigenous and hopefully a martyr, for Herbert de Losinga's still magnificent and then new cathedral, he would be unknown. Our knowledge of his murder is limited to what Thomas of Monmouth says, and equally important, does not say in his far from disinterested account. Crimes have patterns which permit their classification and often solution. A medicolegal analysis of Thomas's account may yield useful insight into this by-lane of medieval history.

William appears to have had friends among the Jews, friendships of which his Uncle Godwin and a certain Wulward, possibly a distant relation or employer with whom William lived, strongly disapproved. Although Judaeo-Christian friendships were not rare in medieval England, they were not so common as now, and Thomas[321] is quite explicit that Uncle Godwin and Wulward had both prohibited William's dealings with Jews. Thomas's account, moreover, refers to William as 'neglected'[322] and as both 'ragged' and 'living precariously',[323] admitting that considerable doubt always did exist at Norwich as to the manner and cause of William's death.[324] Anderson[325] suggests a serious accident or manslaughter during the Purim festival of 1144, but Thomas is silent on this point.

Chronology of the Murder

Monday in Holy Week.[326] A man who represented himself as a delegate of the Archdeacon William of Norwich's cook met William, went with him to his mother's home, and offered him advantageous employment. William's mother was skeptical, but William apparently wanted to accompany the man, ostensibly to work in the Archdeacon's household, and begged his mother to let him go. This unidentified man offered her three shillings, perhaps a bribe or an advance on wages, and she finally agreed to permit a change of occupation rather unusual during the middle ages. Thomas is silent as to where William and the messenger spent the night, but we may presume that it was at the home of William's mother, because William ordinarily lodged with Wulward.[327]

Tuesday in Holy Week.[328] Early in the morning, William and his unidentified guide returned to Norwich, but the guide apparently knew or learned a good deal about William and his family, because he stopped at William's aunt's house and informed her that William's mother had entrusted the boy to him. After the pair departed for the archdeacon's house, the aunt was suspicious and sent her daughter (William's cousin) to follow him. This girl subsequently reported that the pair did not go to the archdeacon's house but entered a dwelling in the Jewish quarter. This house was never identified;[329] the messenger was never identified; and it is not known whether he was Jew or gentile. Not only does William appear to have entered this building voluntarily, but also after this unusual change in destination, no attempt was made to retrieve William who was never again seen alive.

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321 Thomas of Monmouth: De Vita et Passione Sancti Willelmi Martyris Norwicensis, [henceforth, 'TM'] 1.iii.

322 TM: Quem in vita pauperculum atque neglectum fuisse, 2.vii.

323 TM: Puerulum pauperculum pannosum atque arte pelliparia utcumque victitantem, 2.viii.

324 TM: 2.viii.

325 Anderson, M. D.: A Saint at Stake: The Strange Death of William of Norwich, 1144. London, Faber and Faber, 1964, p. 101.

326 TM: March 20, 1144, 1.iv.

327 Translator's note: For clarity, Haveringland was the family parish church where William was baptised as a baby and of his childhood (1.ii, Jessopp and James, p. 13), so it is likely that his mother still lived there (or thereabouts in the countryside). It is some nine miles from Norwich, the city to which William had moved for his apprenticeship and where he lodged with Wulward, perhaps his master (1.iii, p. 15), and we are told by Jessopp and James (1.v, p. 19) that the morning after William's mother had been persuaded to allow her son to change career, the stranger and the boy returned to the city.

328 TM: March 21, 1144, 1.v; 2.ix.

329 Translator's note: Thomas of Monmouth states that the house in which William was slain belonged to Eleazar, 'the richest Jew of them all' (2.xiii, p. 97), the same Jew who had been spotted in the wood with the body in the sack, however, it is not confirmed that this is the same house that William's cousin last saw him enter. In addition, it is curious that Eleazar's property is only named as the crime scene late in Book 2, not in Book 1, the omission of such an important fact lending credence to the suggestion that this detail was added post-hoc for political reasons, to cement the idea of Eleazar (who was murdered in 1146 by one of the bishop's knights) being a key player in William's murder and not just an accessory after the fact.

Spy Wednesday.[330] Thomas of Monmouth fixes Spy Wednesday as the date of William's murder which he reconstructs as follows: William's mouth was forced open and he was gagged by a wooden block (teazle)[331] secured by straps tightly knotted at the nape of the neck. A short piece of rope, about half an inch thick, with three knots, was bound around his forehead so that one knot was in the center of his head and one at each temple. This was tied tightly at the occiput, carried forward around his neck, and tied in a fifth knot under his chin. His head was shaved and stabbed repeatedly with thorn points, some of which remained in the wounds when his body was finally buried in the monastery.[332] He was suspended from an upright post set up between two Y-posts, across which a beam had been placed. William's right hand and foot were bound by cords, but his left hand and foot were pierced by two nails. He was finally stabbed through the left side into the heart, and boiling water was poured over him to wash, close, and staunch the wounds.

Thomas is generally vague about anatomic detail. The state of William's genitalia and anus are not mentioned,[333] and one cannot be sure on the basis of Thomas's account whether or not wounds in addition to those mentioned in the chest and head were present on the body.[334] Lack of anogenital wounds or abrasions in this sort of a violent death would strike most modern coroners as a bit unusual.

Thomas[335] quotes long after the event but does not name a certain poor Christian woman who worked as a maidservant in the Jewish quarter and who heard the commotion of William's slaying as she was boiling water. She claimed that she saw with one eye, as she was handing a vessel of water through the door, a boy fastened to a post just before the door was slammed shut. She hesitated to report this at the time, fearing for her life or wages.[336] She further claimed that she found a boy's belt with its knife, sheath, some needles, and a case in that very room. Thomas[337] states that she showed him these things and demonstrated signs of the murder on the house's timbers.

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330 TM: Second Day of Passover, March 22, 1144, 1.v.

331 Translator's note: A teazle/teasel was a spiked wooden tool used by a fuller for carding wool. Given that the tool was spiked, and was fixed in place 'with a knot as tightly as it could be drawn' (1.v. p. 20), it was evidently being used for torture purposes as well as to silence the victim.

332 TM: 1.xviii.

333 Translator's note: Sharpe's pathologist's intuition was correct – there had indeed been injury to the ano-genital region, in this case, the boy's penis, perhaps a forced circumcision. The following passage (I.vi, p. 35) makes this clear: *Inusitatis uero attrectatum penis conspiciens ex ipso penarum modo suspicari nimirum iam cepit, quoniam non christianus sed reuera iudeus fuerit qui eiusmodi innocentem tam temerario 'ausu' mactare presumpsit.* ['Indeed, seeing the unusually contracted penis, he already began to suspect from the very nature of the punishment, that it was not a Christian but rather a Jew who had presumed to kill such an innocent person with such reckless barbarity.'] The passage was not accurately translated by Jessopp out of consideration for reader sensibilities, which is why Sharpe may have missed it.

334 Translator's note: We are told that the monks who laid out William's body in preparation for his burial in the monk's ceremony, a month after the body was discovered [April 24th], found some pieces of thorns still lodged in the wounds in his head, found 'evident signs of martyrdom [i.e. injuries] in his hands, feet and side, and 'plain indications that he had been plunged into boiling water' (I.xviii, pp. 50, 52). There would also likely to be buccal injuries from the tightly-tied teasel gag. Nevertheless, Sharpe was correct to suspect that there had been further injuries to the body, as the previous footnote indicates.

335 TM: 2.ix.

336 Translator's note: Thomas reveals the maid hesitated speaking out about the crime due to the fact she was bound to the Jews by contract, and this would lead her to losing the wages for her service. She also feared that, as the only Christian woman living among so many Jews, a similar fate to William awaited her if the Jews got any sense that she knew their secret (II.ix, p. 90).

337 TM: Postmodum vero nobis et zonam cum rebus memoratis ostendit, et in domus prefate postibus martirii signa demonstravit, 2.ix.

Was this memory or imagination? Did she witness the slaughter of a lamb as a source of kosher meat? The belt and its attachments drop out of Thomas's narrative, but they would have been valuable religious relics indeed. It is doubtful that the woman could have served as a witness at a trial, had one been held, because by working for Jews she had incurred excommunication. Yet if this witness is to be trusted, her evidence is indeed damning.

Maundy Thursday.[338] Thomas conjectures that after the murder the Jews debated what was to be done. They lived in rented houses, and burial in their own cellars or cesspools would surely raise suspicions towards them were the body to be found. Most murderers have difficulty disposing of their victims' bodies, and William's body also had to be got rid of. The Jews fully appreciated the community's hostility and the gravity of their situation. Danger could best be averted by abandoning William's body at some distance from the Jewish quarter. On Maundy Thursday, however, streets were crowded with Christians going the rounds of various churches, and transporting a dead body through crowded streets was simply out of the question. Prudence required that the body remain hidden until Good Friday, when most people would be indoors, fasting at home, or praying in church.

Good Friday.[339] The murder was revealed by chance early in the morning of Good Friday. Two Jews, one of them identified by Thomas only by the common name Eleazer ('Deus-adjuvet'), were carrying the body wrapped in a sack and were entering Thorpe Wood on the outskirts of Norwich. Aelward Ded, with a single servant, was going from the Church of St. Mary Magdalene to that of St. Leonard's Priory and met them. Ded recognized the two men as Jews and appears to have wondered why they were traveling on Friday and what was in the sack. Ded felt the sack and apparently recognized the contents as a human body, whereupon the two Jews spurred their horses and fled into the wood. Here, they appear to have lashed the body tightly to a tree before returning to the Jewish quarter in Norwich to report that they had been discovered with the body.

The now seriously disturbed representatives of the Jewish community went to Sheriff John de Caineto and offered him a bribe of 100 marks, worth about 800 ounces of silver. The sheriff then summoned Aelward Ded and compelled him to swear that he would lay no information against the Jews. In the event, Ded said nothing of this until he was on his deathbed in 1149, when he was not able to name the men whom he saw in the wood.[340] He remained silent even after John de Caineto's death in 1146.

Anderson[341] suggests that William was alive and being carried elsewhere when Ded encountered the two Jews and that the Jews than stabbed William through the sack and dropped his body, basing this suggestion only on the observation that the gag was still in place when William's body was found. This explanation seems unlikely. Not only would this have constituted open murder on a public highway in the face of two witnesses, but rigor mortis commences very early in the jaws, and extraction of the gag would have been difficult. If a human being is suspended with his arms outstretched and thereby immobilized, the thorax becomes rigid. Purely muscular diaphragmatic respirations, if the bony thorax cannot move, soon prove inadequate to maintain

338 TM: March 23, 1144, 1.vi.

339 TM: March 24, 1144, 1.vii-ix.

340 Translator's note: This is a strange comment for Sharpe to make, given that Thomas states that he got the details of Aelward Ded's confession 'from their lips' of the two clerical confessors, which he has been 'careful to hand down in writing' (1.viii, p. 30). Therefore, we can assume that his report of the encounter (1.vii, pp. 26-28), in which Eleazar and an unidentified man were on horseback with the sack in Thorpe Wood, an account which also details Aelward Ded's actions, thoughts and intentions, was based on the details of Aelward Ded's confession.

341 Anderson, p. 104.

pulmonary ventilation and an adequate return of blood from the periphery to the heart. Congestive cardiac failure soon develops and the victim dies.

Holy Saturday.[342] At dawn on Holy Saturday, the Lady Legarda, widow of William de Apulia, who lived near St. Mary Magdalene's Church and devoted herself to various charitable activities, came to a thicket of bushes in which lay the dead body of a boy clad in his jacket and shoes,[343] with his head shaved and punctured by countless stab wounds. Thomas mentions only jacket and shoes, and one may conclude that William's body was partially undressed. William might be expected to have worn long, closely fitting trousers (trews) and perhaps linen underdrawers. For what it is worth, pictures of William reproduced by Jessopp and James,[344] although from centuries generally squeamish about nudity, all show him with a good head of hair, and pictures of his martyrdom show him wearing brief underdrawers.[345] The partially disrobed body is important. Later the same morning, while Henry de Sprowston, a forester responsible for that part of the wood, was making his rounds, he met an unidentified peasant who informed him that he had just found the body of a dead boy. Custom prohibited Christian burial on either Holy Saturday or Easter Day, and the forester left the body where it was, apparently planning burial in the churchyard of Sprowston, a suburb of Norwich.

Easter Day.[346] News of the boy's death spread, and a great many people visited the scene where the body remained unburied. Some of William's friends recognized him, and Thomas reports that William's frequent visits to the Jewish quarter were widely known. On Easter Monday Henry de Sprowston buried the body where he had found it.[347]

Easter Tuesday.[348] William's priest uncle, Godwin Sturt, with his son Alexander, accompanied William's brother Robert to identify the body. They disinterred and identified the body, found no evidence of putrefaction,[349] and reburied the body with appropriate religious rites. Apparently, Godwin only then informed his wife (William's aunt) of what had happened, and only then did William's mother learn of his death. She accused the Jews of having killed her son, and Godwin Sturt placed the whole matter before ecclesiastical authorities at the meeting of the Synod of Norwich about April 10 or 11, 1144.

The casual treatment of William's disappearance, finding, and burial, from which his mother was absent, suggests a very neglected or very unruly child. His mother's wild accusations, not

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342 TM: March 25, 1144, 1.x-xi.

343 Translator's note: The word corresponding to 'clad in his jacket' is *tunicatum* (lit. 'entunicked'), so it may be that 'clad in a tunic' is a better translation. Sharpe's point regarding the lack of bottom clothing still stands, and opens up the possibility that the boy may have been stripped naked before his ordeal and partly dressed again after death.

344 Jessopp, A., and James, M. R.: The Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich by Thomas of Monmouth, Cambridge, University Press, 1896, passim.

345 Translator's note: The picture that Sharpe has in mind, a late medieval rood-screen panel from Loddon Church, Norfolk, is reproduced at the end of this article.

346 TM: March 26, 1144, 1.xii.

347 TM: March 27, 1144, 1.xii.

348 TM: March 28, 1144, 1.xiii-xvi.

349 Emphasis on putrefaction is of hagiographic not forensic interest. Bodies violently murdered tend to decompose a bit more slowly than those dead of natural causes, and the bodies of scrawny children decay slowest of all. If the wound into William's left side opened his stomach or the splenic flexure of his colon, gastrointestinal contents and gases would have escaped, further retarding decomposition. Norwich can be bitterly cold during Easter week (this writer once saw snow there on Easter Monday), and the body may have been refrigerated naturally. The odor of a decomposing body is, at first, sickeningly sweet. Translator's note: There is no report of deliberate blood-letting in the account (i.e. to be collected for ritual purposes), although it is stated that William's torturers 'made the blood come horribly from the wounds they made'. If this was indeed the case, as has occurred in other alleged cases, the corpses' exsanguinated state would have slowed decomposition.

altogether unknown to coroners' physicians today, may have been a reaction to guilt a having neglected him,[350] and the casual manner of his burial suggests that William may have been the black lamb of the family for whom an unhappy end was no surprise.

Enough public outcry and agitation appear to have developed that the Jews sought protection for a time in the castle keep; and although Thomas[351] is silent whether a proper inquest or trial was held, he describes an imaginary trial and cites considerable hearsay evidence.[352] After public accusations of William's murder had been made against the Jews, unidentified Jews approached William's brother Robert, subsequently a monk at Norwich, who alone could bring a formal charge of murder, with a bribe of ten marks to quash the matter.[353]

Analysis of Evidence

William was tortured and killed, and his death was neither a suicide nor a death by accidental self-induced asphyxia (boys sometimes try to intensify sexual pleasure while masturbating by inducing hypoxia), because he could not have suspended himself by both upper extremities. The shaving of his head almost excludes the possibility of death by misadventure during experimentation or horseplay, because explaining a shaved head at a time when this was a punishment for minor infractions would have been difficult. It is equally definite that the Jews claimed the sheriff's protection and bribed him before William's body was found and that the Jewish community knew of his death long before the Christian community. It appears reasonably certain that a bribe was offered to the one member of William's family, brother Robert, who alone could initiate criminal prosecution. The last time William was seen alive he was seen entering a house in the Jewish quarter, and his dead body was first seen in the custody of two Jews. In modern terms, the Jewish community were at least accessories after the fact. Nothing in Thomas's account suggests that the Jewish community moved against any of its own members, although they may have done so in private,[354] and Thomas's bias might have led him to suppress this information had it taken place and had he known of it.

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350 Translator's note: Elviva may have also felt guilt at having been seduced by the three-shilling bribe to let the boy go before Easter – her prior determination to not to let him go before Easter suggesting that her mother's instinct sensed that there were dark designs for her son (1.iv, pp. 18-19). We are told that after Elviva found out the circumstances of her son's death, 'she went through the streets and open places and, carried along by her motherly distress, she kept calling upon everybody with dreadful screams, protesting that the Jews had seduced and stolen away from her her son and killed him' (1.xv, p. 42).

351 TM: 2.x-xiv.

352 Translator's note: This hearsay evidence includes the testimony of a converted monk, Brother Theobald of Cambridge, who told Brother Thomas that the Jews organised transnationally to made a human sacrifice of a Christian every year, as a part of an ancient ritual to free themselves from exile and return to Zion, which required human blood (2. viii, pp. 93-4), and the testimony of William of Hastings, former Dean of Norwich, who was present at a legal dispute between two Jews, in which one, addressing William directly, accused the other Jew of being one of the boy William's killers (2. viii, p. 95-6).

353 TM: 2.x. Translator's note: Brother Thomas also states that the Jews attempted to bribe Bishop Turbe, so that he would drop the charges against them (2.viii, pp. 92-3).

354 Translator's note: History shows that this would be unlikely. Talmudic precepts regarding the treatment of non-Jews, as most publicly demonstrated by recent events in Palestine, point to the likelihood of no rabbinical punishment, or even social censure, for those Jews involved in the torture and murder of an insignificant member of the out-group. This contempt for out-group life may be seen in the insolent 'joke' that the Jews reportedly made to the Christians once the former felt more confident after securing royal protection (2.xi, p. 95). This taunt suggested that the Christians should be grateful to the Jews for creating a Christian saint and martyr, and that far from committing a crime, the Jews had done the Christians a favour. While this may simply have been a joke in bad taste, rather than a genuine admission of the deed, it does show a startling lack of respect and indifference towards the murdered boy and his grieving family.

Ritual murder is too easily dismissed. Dark strains in human nature exist in all times and places, and the history of the Knights Templars and of the Albigensians contains many murky passages. The obscene ritual blasphemy of the Black Mass is not quite dead, and, like any human instinct, the religious instinct is capable of perversion. Paris[355] reports that in 1234 the young son of Benedict, a Jewish physician converted to Christianity, was kidnapped and forcibly circumcised, so such things did happen. If the maidservant is to be believed, ritual murder is a possibility, although it appears hard to believe that the Jewish community as such can have done this, whatever an individual Jewish psychopath may have done.

Accidental death sometimes occurred during the Purim masquerade, but the Feast of Purim was February 21, 1144, a month before William disappeared. Human beings are human, wine is wine, and horseplay by some law of its own tends to get out of hand, so that misadventures did occur during the Purim celebration which often included an effigy burning of Haman on a cross. Sokrates[356] describes the murder, by crucifixion, of a Christian child by some Syrian Jews celebrating the Purim in 415, apparently by accident. His account appears to be the first description of Jewish ritual murder until William of Norwich, after which a number of vague accusations and two tolerably well-founded reports of such deaths of boys follow. On March 18, 1168, a boy named Harold was found mutilated and tortured, perhaps circumcised, in the Severn River at Gloucester after having been kidnapped by Jews on or about February 21; Purim that year began February 24. In June, 1181, according to Jocelin of Brakelond, a boy named Robert was killed at Bury, quite close to Norwich, under what were then considered suspicious circumstances.[357] Roth[358] relates that in 1191 80 Jews at Bray in northern France were burned at the stake for blasphemy because a Christian murderer of a Jew, having been turned over to the Jewish community for punishment, was scourged through the streets wearing a crown of thorns and crucified.

The *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*[359] and Roth[360] deny that William was murdered at all, despite the witnesses' account of the body, and suggest that he had a cataleptic fit and that he was too hastily (Saturday to Monday!) buried by his relations. This hypothesis ignores a partially undressed, tortured, and gagged boy's body, abandoned and unburied by two men known to be members of the Jewish community at a time when failure to provide Christian burial was a serious sin indeed and is wholly inconsistent with Thomas's chronology which is all the evidence we have. The only credible explanations for 'cataleptic' fits are intoxication, postepileptic states, cerebrovascular accidents, and the Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome. None of these possibilities explain the mutilated body, unless the body was mutilated after death, a suggestion which can be neither affirmed nor refuted on the evidence.[361]

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355 Paris, M.: Chronica. iv.30-31.

356 Sokrates: Historia Ecclesiastica, 7.16.

357 Jessopp and James, pp. lxxiv-lxxix, review William's legend and comment on ritual murder. Jocelin of Brakelond's surviving mention of Robert's murder is in Butler, H. E.: The Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond, London, 1949, pp. 16-17, but his own fuller account has been lost.

358 Roth, C.: The Feast of Purim and the Origins of the Blood Accusation, Speculum, 8: 520 (1933). (Roth confuses ritual murder with the procurement of human blood for use in black magic.)

359 Universal Jewish Encyclopedia. New York, 1940, vol. 2, p. 407.

360 Roth, C.: The Feast of Purim and the Origins of the Blood Accusation, Speculum, 8: 520 (1933).

361 Translator's note: Mutilation after death would not produce bleeding, and according to Rose (p. 157), 'scraps of the youth's bloody clothing' were later exhibited in France, some of which were preserved at Reading Abbey. The 'cataleptic fit' theory also does not explain the presence of the teasel gag in the boy's mouth, which was fixed in place by an extremely tight knot at the back of the boy's head. That the teasel existed is further confirmed by the report of the boy's uncle, the priest Godwin Sturt, using it as a thaumaturgic tool (in exchange for personal gain) years after the killing (5.v, p. 192).

William was murdered, and he was not murdered during a Purim celebration. Ritual murder can be neither implicated nor excluded on the evidence, but the death's careful planning and sadistic nature raise the possibility of cultist murder, with which head shaving is sometimes associated. Professional assassins perform murders which are, almost without exception, neat, tidy, and workmanlike; murders for revenge tend to be messy, as are many of those committed by women; but psychopathic murders, like sexual perversions themselves, tend to be rigidly stereotyped and patterned. The circumstances of William's death point to the latter category.

William's family apparently neglected him,[362] although they opposed his association with Jews. Even after he had been led away by a man both unknown to and mistrusted by his aunt and mother, and after his cousin had reported that he had entered a house in the Jewish quarter instead of the archdeacon's, no attempt was made to bring him back. He was missing and unaccounted for during an entire week, and Thomas nowhere mentions any effort to find him. His death was not reported to his mother until the fourth day after his body was found. From this we must conclude that William sometimes disappeared for days at a time; that young as he was, he had some unwise acquaintances; and that his family exerted remarkably little control over him, or all three. Thomas of Monmouth constantly returns to the theme of William's innocence and virginity but appears to have had some difficulty persuading members of his monastery that William was either saint or martyr. William's cult was always local, and he was, of course, never canonized.[363] The 'anti-William' party was always strong and articulate, the Jews appear to have suffered no sustained disability from his well-publicized murder, and even Thomas's biased account leaves an impression that many people remained very skeptical about the whole affair.

Was William generally known as at least a potentially wayward youngster? Some few children of tender years, male and female, invite the perverse sexual attention of disturbed adults for excitement, personal attention, of financial gain, and we must consider the possibility that William was among their number. Such children typically come from loosely disciplined, loveless, and often fatherless homes. Evidence that William had not gone where he said he was going did not move his family to action. Had he done this before? Where? With whom? When a modern coroner's physician encounters a tortured and partially disrobed body – Thomas's account lists shoes and jacket but not hose, trousers, or underdrawers – of any age or sex, he thinks of what the tabloid press terms a 'sex murder'. If the body is that of an immature male, he thinks of a pedophilic sadist murderer.

The simplest explanation, if ritual murder can be excluded, is that William was selected as a street arab not very likely to be missed by family or friends. The floating, rootless, unattached solitary male city dweller still runs an enormously increased risk of being murdered. Some sadistic sexual deviate, working alone or with no more than one or two companions, very likely took William to a house in the Jewish quarter where he was tortured and died. We cannot prove but must assume some sexual activity as part of the preparation for the murder. Possibly he was suspended in

362 Translator's note: It should be borne in mind that William's widowed mother Elviva appeared to be living some nine miles from Norwich, with 12th-century-peasant levels of communication and transport.

363 Translator's note: Sharpe is obviously referring to papal canonisation, about which he is technically correct, but at this point in church history (i.e. prior to Pope Alexander III's decree in 1170 that canonisation required papal authority), canonisation could be performed by a local bishop, as happened in the case of William of Norwich. Prior to the Second Vatican Council of 1965, after which child martyrs of Jewish ritual/*odium fidei* murder were removed from the Calendar of Saints, William's sainthood was not in doubt. See *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (Encyclopedia Press: New York, 1912), Vol. XV., pp. 635-6, § 'William of Norwich, Saint'; *Little Pictorial Lives of the Saints* (Benziger Brothers: USA, 1925), pp. 187-8, § 'March 24. ST SIMON, Infant Martyr'.

crucifixion, lost consciousness, or died, whereupon his torturers panicked and stabbed him.[364] At least one of the parties to the murder had some knowledge of butchering, because boiling water was poured over him to stop the flow of blood, as is done when an animal is slaughtered. The leading candidate would be his guide who, after all, represented himself as a kitchen employe, although whether Jew or gentile is not known.[365]

When the more responsible members of the Jewish community learned of the murder, assuming that they were not accomplices, they foresaw very serious, perhaps fatal, consequences, and simultaneously undertook both to invoke the sheriff's aid and to get rid of the body. This was neither a very brave nor a very noble act but, considering their precarious status, was an understandable one.

One bit of evidence is disturbing, the shaved head. Although William's iconography consistently demonstrates long curls, Thomas[366] is explicit that the head was shaved. If this is, in fact, a reference to shaving and if this was done before or during the torture, accidental or inadvertent homicide would be difficult to sustain, because apart from the difficulty of shaving a head around which are wrapped both the straps for the gag and another knotted rope, all parties would have been hard pressed to explain this shaving had William lived. Two alternatives should be considered: First, when William lost consciousness or died, a physician was summoned who cut away the hair matted and stained with blood and mucus to examine for a potentially treatable head injury. The second is less likely but possible, namely, 'capite etenim raso' is to be translated 'having slashed the head [of his penis] with a razor' or even 'having bared his glans', reading 'caput' as a euphemism for glans penis.[367]

This kind of mutilation fits ritual and sadistic murder equally well.

Conclusion

Ritual murder is rare and poorly documented, but sadistic murder is both common and well documented. Sadistic murder by a Jewish psychopath, followed by a united Jewish community attempt to avoid the possible bloodshed which might follow, would best explain Thomas's account. The weight of evidence and probability is that William was a naughty little boy who had the

364 Translator's note: Alternatively, the 'frightful wound in his left side, reaching even to his inmost heart' was a deliberate re-enactment the famous act of the Roman soldier ('Longinus') who pierced Jesus's side with a lance, which tradition says reached to his heart. If it was not such a re-enactment, it may be that Thomas hoped that his description would nevertheless evoke this association in the reader's mind.

365 Translator's note: Interestingly, this is also the theory of Jewish historian V. D. Lipman, who, assessing the evidence four years before Sharpe, wrote in his 1967 book *The Jews of Medieval Norwich* that the murder appeared to be 'a sexual crime against a child' by 'a sexual criminal, indulging sadistic impulses', with the man posing as the archdeacon's emissary 'the most likely culprit'. He also rightly points out that 'had this mysterious stranger been a local Jew, or even had he looked like a Jew, this would surely have been recorded in Thomas's detailed narrative' (pp. 55-56). One could also argue that because this man is designated a 'traitor' (*traditor*) throughout the text, Thomas must have considered him to be of William's own people (i.e. a Christian). However, given that he was evidently someone of an ethnic type with which William's mother was unfamiliar, it strongly suggests that he was a foreigner or outsider to her, certainly not Anglo-Saxon. Anderson (p. 82) suggests that, to prevent possible future recognition the Jews may have used 'as their intermediary the servant of some Jewish merchant who was only visiting Norwich, so that the man would be far away before the murder was discovered'.

366 TM: 1.v.

367 Translator's note: This is somewhat stretching credibility, not least because the phrase is followed by 'they stabbed it with countless thorn-points', and we know for a fact that they did just this to William's head. This attempt to read new meanings into the text is evidently due to Sharpe's disbelief that there was not some form of genital trauma, and indeed his suspicions have been shown to be correct.

misfortune to encounter a sadistic sexual deviate. The Jews' attempt to conceal the crime was based on fear rooted in Jewish massacres following far less provocative mishaps. Blasphemy is among the last crimes even an apostate Christian will commit, and the murderer was probably a member of the Jewish community, very likely a butcher or someone with kitchen experience. The 'ritual' components may be explained by suggesting that the sex maniac was also a morbidly anti-Christian religious fanatic. Despite ecclesiastical pressure, it may be that the sheriff did not want to prosecute, bribe or no bribe, appreciating that young people who drift through the streets often come to evil ends and sometimes have astonishingly highly placed playmates. A medicolegal proverb of some validity sums it up nicely: 'those who deviate from the norm must beware the consequences.'

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Translator's Appendix II: Compendium of Alleged Ritual Murders in Medieval England

A fitting complement to this study is the following list of ritual murder allegations found in the English historical record. Just as it has been the *sine qua non* for modern Western and Jewish historiographies (to the extent that these can be considered separate entities) to immediately dismiss these incidents as bigoted or interested fabrications, so it is helpful to the independent researcher, who may not be so prepared to dismiss out of hand the word of monks, jurists, stewards, bishops, cardinals, popes and kings, to have a definitive list of the extant evidence from contemporary sources for each of these cases. In such a task of open-minded revisionism, which seeks to find the historical reality beyond the so-called anti-Semite/apologist binary, inspiration can be found in the work of Prof. Ariel Toaff, the Israeli scholar who bravely foreswore the modern Western/Jewish standard practice around the topic for the sublimity of communicating the truth in all of its nuance and complexity. His magisterial *Blood Passover* (2007), withdrawn from circulation because of its admirable impartiality, must be read by anyone wishing to understand both the phenomenon of Jewish ritual murder and the obfuscatory, obstructive historiography which surrounds it. To some, the ability to debate over the existence of such phenomena may seem as unimportant, but this is to be oblivious to an eternal reality of mankind: that epistemological battles, if left uncontested, will over time become a battle for existence itself.

1144 – NORWICH.

(*See main text and Appendix I for different analyses of the case*.) The William of Norwich case is England's first documented allegation of Jewish ritual murder. The primary source of information that we have for this event, one may say the Ur-text for what is known today, is Thomas of Monmouth's *The Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich* (as translated and edited by Jessopp and James). This edition has a valuable introduction, which is followed by the original Latin text with its English translation below on the same page. Note that of the seven books of which *The Life and Miracles* is comprised, only Books 1 and 2 pertain to the murder and its aftermath. Miri Rubin's 2015 translation of the text may not be as reliable.[368] As well as Sharpe's singular 1971 article (reproduced in Appendix I), Anderson's 1964 book *A Saint at Stake* also

368 I have come to this tentative judgement due to the fact that Rubin, like Jessopp and James, draws a veil over the evidence of William's penile trauma/mutilation with the phrase 'the boy had been handled with unusual kinds of torment' (p. 25). Such an omission could be understood in the Jessopp and James translation due to the Victorian era in which it was published, and because it was mitigated by the fact that the Jessopp retained it in the original Latin on the same page for educated readers (I.xi, p. 35). That the Jessopp and James omission was a consideration for sexual rather than ethnic sensibilities can be seen from the open-minded stance they take in the Introduction (p. lxxix), which does not rule out the possibility that this had been a Jewish ritual murder i.e. 'a reversion to half-forgotten practices of a darker age' or the result of a Jewish 'mad hatred of a dominant system', i.e. what the Catholic church's investigators of such cases once deemed *odium fidei*. Rubin's book, published in 2015, while restoring a similarly sensitive passage about a pilgrim's intimate ailment (Bk 3, xiii), does not restore the phrase referring to William's 'unusually contracted penis' [the description of a forced circumcision?], which would appear to indicate that a different taboo was in operation for this latest translation.

provides valuable food for thought, as does Jessopp's 1893 essay on the topic. McCulloh (1997) analyses features of the *Life*'s composition and the contemporaneous dissemination of knowledge of the case, providing a useful survey of the extant chronicular literature in the process, while Toaff (2007) comes to the case with an open mind, a position which he maintains after reviewing the evidence. Langmuir (1984) provides the skeptic's view, while Latinists may wish to consult the account of hagiographer John Capgrave (1393-1464), embedded within a more general 17th-century discussion of Jewish ritual murder, in *Acta Sanctorum*, Vol. IX, pp. 586-8 (ed. Carnandet, Paris: Victor Palmé, 1865). Capgrave's account conforms to that of Brother Thomas, but it has been included here for its potential historical interest.

Some of the more recent research does provide the odd tit-bit of historical insight and context outside of the primary sources already mentioned, and is therefore included in the Translator's Bibliography, but the reader should be aware of the agenda-driven nature of modern Western scholarship. This activism-scholarship, characterised by the *a priori* conclusions of which Toaff famously complained in his *Blood Passover*, can be seen in the scholarship of certain writers, who attempt to downplay or even erase the evidence of foul play in William's death. This activism can be seen as having been started by Joseph Jacobs in 1897, with his attempt to explain the problem of the body in the woods as that of William falling unconscious in some kind of cataleptic fit that was mistaken for death, and which led to him being buried alive (*St. William of Norwich,* pp. 750-753). This theory, which also neatly condemns William's relatives for not trying to resuscitate him, and implies that they were 'the true authors of the death of William of Norwich' (*idem*, p. 750), was then promulgated by the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* of 1903, where it became the accepted explanation in Jewish historiography. Thus we read in a supposed work of scientific reference: 'Absolutely no evidence was adduced that a murder had been committed; it seems indeed that the lad had been merely in a cataleptic fit when found, and was buried alive by his own relatives.' (*ibid*, § Blood Accusation, Vol. 3, p. 230 ff., also found in the 1906 online edition in Vol. 3, p. 260 ff.).

This 'knowledge' was then taken up by subsequent writers, among them Cecil Roth, who by means of clever wordplay, transformed Jacobs' wild conjecture into general scientific consensus: e.g. 'Recent theory maintains that…' (Roth, 1933 p. 523), 'Modern inquirers, after careful examination of the facts, have concluded that…' (Roth, 1934, p. 14; 1941, p. 9). Any effectiveness of this theory on the readership relies on the unspoken but pervasive modern historiographical trope, rooted in Whig historiography but latterly exacerbated by ethnic animus, that medieval Christian Europeans were stupid and ignorant.

More recently, Emily Rose, in her award-winning 2015 book, *The Murder of William of Norwich* (a tract which, despite its title, does not engage with the substantive allegations made in the only real documentary proof of the case), suggests 'adolescent suicide' as a cause for the twelve-year-old's 'sad but unremarkable death' (p. 21).[369] Her theory, along with that of Jacobs, completely

369 Rose (pp. 18-19) also insinuates (she does not say it explicitly, but lets her readers make the connection), that because the incident took place during The Anarchy, William was likely tortured and killed by some kind of roaming militia due to the ongoing chaos of war, and as evidence cites a passage in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which describes torture taking place in Norman castles during the period, as well as giving details of a kidnapping ring in Bristol (incidentally, some 200 miles from Norwich). However, as the primary sources themselves assert, such abductions and torture took place in order to extort money or equivalent resources from the perceived wealthy victims, exactly what a fatherless Anglo-Saxon boy, or 'poor ragged little lad, picking up a precarious livelihood at his tanner's business' (*Life and Miracles*, 2.viii, p. 85) would not have. Rose therefore floats the idea that William came from a relatively wealthy and prominent Anglo-Saxon family, basing her claim on unsubstantiated theories about his father and grandfather, but such an allegation of wealth and status is repeatedly negated in the *Life and Miracles* itself (e.g. 1.i. p. 10). However, Rose's insinuations, given weight in the minds of credulous readers by a

ignores the undeniable evidence of foul play (see Appendix I). Rose supports her suicide theory by alleging that it had been William's clerical uncle, Godwin Sturt, who invented the accusation of William being murdered by the Jews in order to shield the family from the shame of his nephew taking his own life. However, this theory is not based on the text itself, which reveals that after Lady Legarda, the unnamed wood-cutting peasant, and Henry de Sprowston had come across the mutilated corpse, countless curious townspeople had heard the news and had gone to view the still relatively fresh body, coming to the same conclusion as Henry about the manner of the boy's death before Godwin was even aware that his nephew was missing. Thus, the popular view of William being a victim of the Jews was formed by a collective first-hand experience of the corpse within days of the boy's death (a corpse which showed signs of extensive sadistic torture, including genital trauma) and not, as Rose or McCulloh would have us think, due to the hearsay of a formal accusation from an interested party, whether the priest Godwin Sturt at a synod the following month, or the bishop William Turbe four years later.[370] From *The Life and Miracles*:

> Whereupon, going with the peasant as his guide, Henry found the boy, but who he was or how he had got there he could not understand. But when he looked at him very carefully to find out if by any chance he knew him, he perceived that he had been wounded, and he noticed the wooden torture in his mouth. Indeed, seeing the unusually contracted penis, he now began to suspect, from the very nature of the punishment, that it was no Christian but in very truth a Jew who had ventured to slaughter an innocent child of this kind with such horrible barbarity… Accordingly, when he had pondered over these things with much wondering, Henry went back and told his wife and all his household all he had seen.
>
> […] But in the meantime by one man after another telling others their several versions of the story the rumour got spread in all directions, and when it reached the city it struck the heart of all who heard it with exceeding horror. The city was stirred with a strange excitement, the streets were crowded with people making disturbance, and already it was asserted by the greater part of them that it could only have been the Jews who would have wrought such a deed, especially at such a time. And so some were standing about as if amazed by the new and extraordinary affair; many were running hither and thither, but especially the boys and the young men; and, a divine impulse drawing them on, they rushed in crowds to the wood to see the sight. What they sought they found; and, on detecting the marks of the torture on the body, and carefully looking into the method of the act, some suspected that the Jews were not guiltless of the deed; but

surfeit of impressively researched but ultimately extraneous historical detail, leads to a situation in which the following is the only statement made for William of Norwich's death on the 'List of Child Saints' Wikipedia page: 'E. M. Rose points out that road robberies and kidnappings gone wrong were a frequent cause of death in region during the period of The Anarchy when the Crown struggled to safeguard the roads.' Indeed, despite the ostensible topic of *The Murder of William of Norwich*, Rose devotes more of her book to the later murder of a Jewish banker than she does to the murder of the Christian boy, the latter event which, despite her book's title, she denies as such.

370 Rose wants her readers to believe that the lack of a trial was an indication that there was no real belief or evidence that the Jews had committed the crime (or indeed that a crime had been committed at all), whereas the *Life* tells us that the bishop's accusation of the Jews, made during the king's visit to Norwich, was taken very seriously, and the king requested that the matter be postponed so that it could be heard at the upcoming general council of the clergy and barons in London. However, before that general council could take place, the Jews had managed to secure a private audience with the king in London, where money reportedly changed hands, and as a result the case was postponed indefinitely (2.xiv, pp. 110-1). For a similar instance of a case being 'permanently adjourned' from season to season, see the 1276 London case.

> some, led on by what was really a divine discernment, protested that it was so. When these returned, they who had stayed at home got together in groups, and when they heard how the case stood, they too hurried to the sight, and on their return they bore their testimony to the same effect. And thus all through the Saturday and all through Easter day all the city everywhere was occupied in going backwards and forwards time after time, and everybody was in excitement and astonishment at the extraordinary event.
>
> And so the earnestness of their devout fervour was urging all to destroy the Jews, and they would there and then have laid hands upon them but that restrained by fear of the Sheriff John they kept quiet for awhile.
>
> [*Life and Miracles*, 1.xi, pp. 34- 37. Note that I have amended the translation to reflect the report of genital trauma present in the original Latin text, a phrase that Jessopp, mindful of Victorian sensibilities, glossed over with the euphemistic clause 'becoming aware he had been treated with unusual cruelty'.][371]

Later in his 1897 article, after taking into account the reported injuries of the corpse, Jacobs (*St. William of Norwich*, p. 753) floats both the suggestion of 'suicide by crucifixion' (!), and the suggestion that the boy's own relatives had crucified him:

> The boy's body is found, with the head shaven or tonsured, and with marks of punctures by thorns, on the Saturday after Good Friday. The probability of some form of crucifixion having been gone through with the body is considerably raised by this fact, if we can trust to it. Now, if Jews resorted to such a measure, it could only be out of mere wanton cruelty and hatred; but cannot we imagine fanatical Christians, of a low degree of culture, deriving from their crass views about the crucifixion that salvation will be brought down upon a lad and his family by undergoing the *form* of crucifixion on Good Friday? Cases have been known even of men committing suicide by crucifying themselves, and it is a well-known principle of folklore that the folk-mind considers a form as good as the reality. Suppose such an idea to have existed in William's family, suppose them to have gone through the form of crucifixion with the little lad on Good Friday, and a cataleptic fit to have supervened while the poor little lad was on the cross, almost all the facts of the case would be explained.

In modern Western historiography, wanton cruelty and hatred emanating from Jews is literally unthinkable, and so the only possible explanation was that the primitive Christians, with their 'crass views' and 'folk-mind', had done the deed. Unsurprisingly, these latter theories of Jacobs appear not to have gained any traction with subsequent writers, who understand that there is a limit to reader credulity.

As the intrepid researcher will discover, given the fact that no plausible alternative explanation has been provided for William's death, the most recent scholarly offerings on the

371 Note also that traditionally William was understood have been circumcised prior to his murder, as we see, for example, in the Rev. Francis Blomefield's 1745 *Essay Towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk* (Vol. II, p. 33).

incident tend not to deal with the details of the victim's death at all, with the least concern given to who actually committed the deed. Instead, they focus on the political, social and economic benefits accruing to certain clergy and the cathedral as an institution from the victim's martyrdom and subsequent cult, the implication being that these worldly benefits in some way diminish or negate the allegations of what happened to the child at the centre of the controversy. This recent change of historiographical approach towards cases of alleged Jewish ritual murder appears to have been a conscious strategy, as can be inferred from Hannah Johnson's 2012 book, which discusses this new historiographical approach at length, namely, a pivot away from 'moralizing determinations of historical responsibility that tend to equate responsibility with blame, and seek judgements (implicitly or explicitly) about events', towards 'an ethics of contingency and mutual implication that emphasizes the interconnectedness of historical communities and seeks to understand intergroup conflicts while drawing back from judgement' (*Blood Libel*, p. 62). Thus, as we see in the most recent historiography of the William of Norwich case, as with other cases, medieval Christian society is pathologised and narratives of Jewish victimhood are foregrounded. Meanwhile, the matter of the dead Christian boy and what actually happened to him slips out of the discursive frame.

Representation of St. William at Worstead Church, Norfolk. Note that he carries two nails, in keeping with the *Vita*'s account of his passion, wears a crown of thorns, has a knife sticking out of his side, and the wounds on one foot and one ankle correspond to nailing and tying respectively. The full head of hair that features in his iconography, as Sharpe points out, does not correspond to the report that his head was shaved during his torture and murder.

1168 – GLOUCESTER.

As with the earlier Norwich case above, all of what is known today regarding 1168 Gloucester case stems from a single Ur-text, the *Historia Monasterii Sancti Petri Gloucestriae* [The History of the Monastery of St. Peter of Gloucester]. This chronicle spans the period 681-1400 (approx.), and was compiled during the abbatiate of Walter Frocester (1382-1412). The level of detail contained within the unknown scribe's chronicle of the incident indicates that a contemporary *Vita* of the boy martyr must have existed, which, by the time the *Historia* came to be written, probably remained extant only as a lectionary or legendary [Hillaby, p. 75]. The following is a full English translation of the text, as reproduced in Welander, pp. 609-10. (NB: A few edits have been made for clarity.) The original Latin version of this text can be found in Hart, Vol I, pp. 20-1.

> In the year of Our Lord 1168, a boy [named] Harold, who is buried in the church of Saint Peter the Apostle at Gloucester in front of the altar of Saint Edmund the Archbishop and Saint Edward the King in the northern part, is said to have been enticed away secretly by Jews, as most believe, on February 22. He was hidden until March 17. During a certain night, that of the preceding Friday, he was set before Jews who had gathered from all over England under the pretext of circumcising a boy at the celebration of a great festival according to the Law. They pretended this rather craftily and also misled the citizens of Gloucester with such deceit. They tortured him with extreme cruelty. In fact, no Christian was present who might have seen or heard his torments, nor have we found out from any Jew what went on. What we do know is that, somewhat later, virtually the entire community of monks of Gloucester with almost all the citizens of the same city – an innumerable throng from all directions – gathered around the spectacle of the boy's remains. They examined the scars – the burns – on his body, the thorns fastened around his head and under his armpits, and the liquid wax poured in his eyes and on his face. By carefully examining the evidence of the way his hands were clenched it was believed – or the signs pointed to it – that they had inflicted on him tortures like those of being crucified. And at length it was seen that, by placing him between two fires, they severely burned his sides, his back and buttocks, with his knees, hands and feet, including the soles, also scorched. They fastened thorns around his head and under both armpits. They poured hot dripping [i.e. animal fat] over the entire surface of his body, as we do when basting a roast. They put molten wax in his eyes as well as his ears, [to judge] from his twisted neck. They also knocked out his front teeth. They put him to death and threw him into the River Severn after tying his feet with his own girdle, whilst he, in his body soon after found in the water, displayed a glorious [and] blameless martyrdom for Christ.
>
> Truly it was by the bountiful gift of divine grace that on the Saturday, which in that year was March 18, he was brought to light about the ninth hour by fishermen and dragged out of the river. He was placed on the riverbank next to where he was found, and was watched over by many that night, his body being seen by many clergy and the common people who hastened there together. Indeed on the morrow, the Lord's Day – March 19 – at the start of sunset, he was solemnly carried to the church of Saint Peter of Gloucester, to the monastic [section], accompanied by an innumerable throng of people

> of both sexes, with the Lord Abbot Hameline and the whole [monastic] community advancing to meet him. Received by the ringing of the great bells, he was borne aloft and carried away the same night to a more private place with lights kindled all round. He was viewed by the brothers, and carefully inspected and washed. And so eventually on the morrow he was buried with great reverence before the altar of the Holy Confessors Archbishop Edmund and King Edward in the northern part [of the church].
>
> Moreover his garments as seen by the beholders bore the marks of a presumed martyrdom. For a new shirt with which he was clothed, was found to be so completely scorched around him that about 300 holes were found in it, and scarcely any part of the frayed seams was attached to another. And even more of the same was found in his tunic, according to one who saw his sacred little body and his clothes, and [who] handled both more carefully. This person bore true witness, and made significant statements by which the truth might be made plain to all.

Researchers should note, to avoid confusion, that various other sources have offered different years for the killing, if no additional information (all references elsewhere in the historical record are brief mentions of the event). For example, the Fitzhugh Chronicle gives the year 1160 for the killing, while Foxe states that ‘a certaine child was crucified of the Jewes in the towne of Glocester, An. 1161’ (Vol. I, p. 302, col. II, although note that this source also gives the year of William of Norwich’s murder as 1145), a datum which may have been taken from the earlier Peterburgh Chronicles (Stapleton, p. 3). The academic Joe Hillaby has an interesting if unsubstantiated theory that the event actually took place in 1167, but was moved to 1168 by the chronicler so that the dates could fit better with Christian holy days (Hillaby, pp. 77-79). However, his theory is based on the abduction and killing being timed to fit with the Christian calendar, i.e. Shrove Tuesday, the day after Passion Sunday, whereas the year 1167 does in fact make sense if the internal logic of the incident is that of the Jewish ritual calendar, i.e. Purim, as Cecil Roth asserts (see below). Whatever the year of the event, there is no dispute that it coincided with a large Jewish celebration in the city, which saw the arrival of Jews from all over England. This helped to cement the Jews’ guilt in the minds of the people, not least because the body was discovered on the eighth day of the festival. There is no record of the arrest or punishment of any perpetrator(s).

On the topic of this murder, Roth (1933, pp. 523-524) appears to admit that the Jews may indeed have committed this crime in conjunction with a Jewish festival, but in this case the festival concerned is Purim, rather than a circumcision celebration or Passover. Regarding the idea that Harold was stolen by the Jews around February 21th, and hidden until March 17th, Roth states:

> The dates given are significant. That year, Passover fell on March 26, Good Friday on March 29, and twelve days before that date it was the Lenten season rather than the period of preparation for the Jewish feast which was most in evidence. February 21, however, approximated closely enough with Purim, which began on February 24. Is it possible that in this whole story, with its inexplicable gap between the kidnapping of the child and his assassination, we have a Ritual Murder associated with Purim rather than with Passover, but deferred in execution so as to approximate with the Passion season?

1181/1182 – BURY ST. EDMUNDS.

In *The Chronicle of Florence of Worcester* (Forester, p. 303), we find the following entry for 1181: ‘A boy, named Robert, was sacrificed by the Jews, at St. Edmund’s, on Wednesday the fourth of the ides of June [June 10th]’ while in the chronicle of Gervase of Canterbury (Stubbs, *The Historical Works…*, Vol. I, p. 296) we read the following entry for the same year: ‘A certain boy named Robert was martyred this year at Eastertide [*ad Pascha*] at Bury St Edmunds by Jews. He has been honourably buried in nearby St Edmunds’ Church, where he has reportedly become famous for his many miracles.’ Jocelin of Brakelond makes this same statement in his own chronicle (Greenway, p. 15), as well as revealing that he himself wrote a *Vita* of this child martyr, a document which is sadly lost to history. Slightly more information about the killing is offered in the Melrose chronicle, when we read for the year 1181: ‘Many and great miracles were performed at St. Edmund’s sanctum by the blessed boy Robert, whom a certain Jew secretly handed over to be cruelly killed.’[372] The antiquarian William of Worcester (1415-1482), in his *Itineraries* (Harvey, p. 163), writes the following entry for ‘Saint Robert’: ‘St. Robert, a boy crucified by the Jews at Bury; his day on [10] June, but is celebrated on — May.’

In modern times, the scholar Joe Hillaby (pp. 86-7) provides evidence that the child was locally canonised, and had a shrine dedicated to his cult in the abbey church up until at least 1479, where he was still a potent force throughout the 15th century. As proof of this, he reproduces a ballad from a mid-15th century manuscript, apparently composed by John Lydgate, a friend of Chaucer, which states that St. Robert had been ‘scourged, and naylled to a tre’, which resulted in his veins bleeding (‘*þi* veynes bleede’) and his clothing becoming blood-soaked (‘al sangweyn was thy weede’). The poem also indicates that he was an infant, perhaps even only a baby, given that he was ‘a sowking child, tendre of Innocence’ who was ‘without language’, and still relied on ‘mylk’ and ‘tendre pap’ for nutrition (Hillaby, pp. 108-9). A series of images from a Dyson Perrins manuscript (reproduced below), portrays, among other things, Robert’s body being thrown into a well by a woman, perhaps the treacherous ‘norice’ [wet nurse] of Lydgate’s poem, who, according to the Latin legend around her: ‘wanted to hide the lamp of God but could not’.

372 *Chronica de Mailros* (ed. J. Stevenson, Edinburgh, 1835), p. 91. The monk Ralph of Coggeshall also records the killing with a brief entry for 1181 in his chronicle: ‘The boy Robert is cruelly killed by the Jews at St. Edmunds’ sanctum.’ (*Radulphi de Coggeshall, Chronicon Anglicanum*, ed. J. Stevenson, London, 1875, p. 20.)

1183 ? – BRISTOL.

The ritual murder story of the child ‘Adam of Bristol’/ ‘Adam of Redcliff’ survives solely in a unique manuscript (British Library, Harley MS 957, fols. 19r-27r) likely to have been written around a century after the purported event, i.e. around 1280, certainly no later than 1325. The boy, apparently almost six and half years old[373] and from the parish of St Mary of Redcliff near Bristol, was tempted into the house of the Jew Samuel and his family, where he was extensively tortured and crucified in the privy at the back of the house, just as Samuel had crucified three other boys during the previous year, of whom we are told ‘two were born and brought up within the walls of the city, and the third from the parish of St. Mary of Bedminster’. However, during the torture of this fourth victim, at the point when the boy was taken down from the cross and bound to a spit to be roasted by the fire, like a human version of the Passover lamb (Yuval, p. 197), the text tells of how a divine voice called out in Hebrew to take the child from the fire. This command is obeyed, however, Samuel soon returns to the boy to the cross. After an exchange of conversation, another divine voice declares itself to be Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Samuel then stabs the boy in his side to his heart, which kills him, unleashing a flurry of disembodied voices. This leads to Samuel’s wife and son to declare their belief in Christianity. Horrified by this impending apostasy, Samuel kills them too, in an event which may be a cultural echo of the Jewish mass martyrdom [Qiddush ha-Shem] events of 1096 in the German Rhineland, or perhaps more likely, being closer to the time and place to the manuscript’s author, the 1190 tragedy in York, in which Jews slaughtered their closest family members before committing suicide, out of fear of forced baptism.[374] Later in the tale, the Jewish mother and son appear as beatific visions in purple cloaks, to symbolise that in death they had been transformed into Christian martyrs.

The evidently highly fictional and dramatic nature of the story, along with the lack of corroborating evidence in the historical record, make it difficult to believe that this manuscript is based in any way on real historical events. There are a myriad of supernatural elements, including the divine voice in Hebrew, the heavenly fragrance and light emanating from the privy, and the angel with a burning sword who guards the privy entrance after the boy has been buried there, forcing the killer to move to his sister’s house, which also weigh against the text’s credibility. Even the ‘plausible’ plot elements are unlikely, such as the drunken, womanising Irish priest on pilgrimage who is bribed by the Jewish siblings to return to Ireland with the boy’s body for a secret burial (in which he is aided by angels), while other elements of the story appear to have been reproduced from earlier ritual murder traditions, e.g. Adam being tempted into the Jew’s home with the promise of apples is seen in the balladry arising from the Hugh of Lincoln case, the boy being gagged with a piece of wood tied around his head with a rope is found in the William of Norwich case, and his being roasted on the fire is redolent of the report of Harold of Gloucester’s corpse. Researchers may also find echoes of the Burton Annals version of the Hugh of Lincoln case with the report of Samuel continually spitting into Adam’s face and Samuel’s wife cutting off Adam’s nose and his lips ‘up to the teeth’ with a breadknife. There is also a novel element of Samuel’s young son, who would appear to be approximately the same age as Adam (he cannot reach up to

373 This is how I interpreted ‘*Erat enim puer .vij. Annorum et semis exceptis diebus paucis*’.

374 Given that the few Jews who did not commit suicide were treacherously killed by the Christians after promises of safe passage on baptism, it is reasonable to assume that many of the Jewish parents who killed their own children at York feared a worse fate for their children than simply one of forced conversion, one that was even more horrible than that which was eventually administered by a loving hand.

strike Adam's face), being encouraged to take part in the torture. This family triad are the only individuals involved in the crime, and there is no evidence of deliberate exsanguination for ritual purposes.

Given the supernatural and moralising elements, and the text containing so much direct speech, academic consensus is that the manuscript was likely based on a morality play which may have been performed as a parish drama on the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (15th August), not least because the manuscript has Adam's crucifixion taking place on the eve of this feast.

Further sources of inspiration have been traced by the German historian Christoph Cluse, who has found papal and Talmudic writings which appear to inform the text. For example, the placing of the murder in the privy is very likely to have been inspired, if indirectly, by a statement made by Pope Innocent III in his letter written to King Philip II of France on January 16th, 1205. The entire letter centres on the pope's complaints about Jewish behaviour, but one paragraph is particularly germane to this popular perception:

> What is even worse, blaspheming against God's name, they publicly insult Christians by saying that they (Christians) believe in a peasant who had been hung by the Jewish people. Indeed, we do not doubt that He was hung for us, since He carried our sins in his body on the cross, but we do not admit that He was a peasant either in manners or in race. Forsooth, they themselves cannot deny that physically He was descended from priestly and royal stock, and that His manners were distinguished and proper. Also on Good Friday the Jews, contrary to old custom, publicly run to and fro over the towns and streets, and everywhere laugh, as is their wont, at the Christians because they adore the Crucified One on the Cross, and, through their improprieties, attempt to dissuade them from their worship. The doors of the Jews are also open to thieves half the night, and if any stolen goods be found with them, none can obtain justice from them. The Jews, likewise, abuse the royal patience, and when they remain living among the Christians, they take advantage of every wicked opportunity to kill in secret their Christian hosts. Thus it has recently been reported that a certain poor schoolboy had been found murdered in their latrine.
>
> [*The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century*: pp. 108-9, see Translator's Bibliography. Note that *scholaris* has been translated here as 'schoolboy'.]

Cluse also draw attention to the anonymous author's inversion of the privy with the church, which takes place when a host of angels sing around Adam's burial place in the privy 'like a choir of monks', which in turn prompts one of the priest's lay companions to ask: 'Where is this choir singing, and where is the church?' As Cluse points out (pp. 302-3), this may be an ironic reference to contemporaneous Christian polemics against the Talmud, in which Jews were accused of calling the male saints fornicators, the female saints whores, the church a latrine [*vocant enim sanctos kezessym (quod est scortatores), et sanctas kezesoz (quod est meretrices) et ecclesiam beth-mossab vel beth-kyce (quod est latrina)*]. The manuscript author demonstrates similar Talmudic knowledge when he has the Jew Samuel call the Virgin Mary a wretched whore [*meretrix pessima*] and Jesus a magician and evil sorcerer [*magus et maleficus*]. Additionally, the author has Samuel spit when the

Son of God is invoked in a blessing, which could well be a reference to the Jewish *Alenu le-shabeah* prayer, which the medieval Church saw as a rite in which the Jews ritually spat after making a veiled slander against Christ. Such Talmudic knowledge may have been known to English clergymen of the time due to the 1240 Disputation of Paris (also known as the Trial of the Talmud), after which Latin translations of Jewish liturgical poems and prayers cursing Jesus, Mary, and Christians themselves had been disseminated across Europe (Yuval, pp. 132, 195). Samuel also spits three times, which may be an authorial allusion to Samuel's condemnation of the Trinity, or else a knowledge of the Jewish folk practice of spitting three times for self-protection against the unclean (see Trachtenberg: *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, pp. 120, 159).

A full English translation of the text has yet to be published, although a translation by Robert C. Stacey has had a limited circulation among scholars and may at some point be published in book form. In the meantime, Latinists can consult the entire Latin transcript, which Cluse has published alongside his aforementioned analysis (in German), and English speakers can consult the summaries and analyses of Robert C. Stacey's 1998 article 'From Ritual Crucifixion to Host Desecration: Jews and the Body of Christ' (pp. 15-22) and Israel Jacob Yuval's *Two Nations in Your Womb* (pp. 196-204). A summarised version of the tale is also found in Robin Mundill's *The King's Jews* (pp. 92-6). The text is also briefly discussed (pp. 127-8) by the Rev. Michael Adler in his *The Jews of Bristol in Pre-Expulsion Days*, from whom the estimated year of the crime is taken.

Curiously, the Israeli scholar Ariel Toaff appears to believe in the historicity of the reported event, as in Chapter 7 of his infamous *Blood Passover* we find the following passage:

> The case of Adam, considered the victim of a ritual homicide occurring at Bristol at the end of the 13th century, provides us with a true and proper serial killer, the Jew Samuel, who, 'in the days of King Henry, father of the other King Henry', is said to have killed three Christian children in one year. Thereafter, with the collaboration of his wife and son, he is said to have gone on to kidnap another child, named Adam, who, tortured, mutilated (perhaps subjected to circumcision) and crucified, is said finally to have been skewered on a spit like a lamb and roasted over a flame. Samuel's wife and son are said to have repented, expressing the intention to bathe in the baptismal waters, but at this point the perfidious and criminal Jew is said to have killed them both as well. As we see, sometimes the popular psychosis of ritual murder caused persons caught up in irrational fears to mistake one thing for another. And this regardless of the fact that perhaps these fears could have some correspondence to actual crimes committed by individuals deranged by phobias and psychoses of a religious nature, transferred to the plane of action.

Toaff references the above-cited Stacey article as his source, so he was clearly aware of the scholarly argument for not taking the story seriously, but, curiously, he appears to have taken the report of multiple murder at face value, if differing in the perception of the killer. Note that Toaff appears to have confused when the text was written for when the events themselves were purported to have taken place. It may well be there was a kernel of truth to the story, and in the succeeding century this kernel was transformed, by means of fantastic embellishments and exaggerations, into a Christian morality tale.

1192 – WINCHESTER.

A boy is reported to have disappeared on Good Friday and been crucified over the Jewish Passover. The *Cronicon* of Richard of Devizes, a Benedictine monk of St. Swithun's Priory in Winchester, tells of the disappearance of a young French boy in the city. This boy, an orphan who had travelled from France to England by invitation of a French Jew, was sent, along with a commendatory letter written in Hebrew, to work as an apprentice shoemaker in the Jewish Quarter of Winchester, in the area of *Scowrtenestret*, or Shorten Street (lit. 'Shoemakers Street', today known as Jewry Street). Accusations arose of the boy having been abducted by the Jewish shoemaker when, after some months of his stay in Winchester, he disappeared on the day of the Holy Cross [Good Friday]. The boy's Jewish master, when asked of the apprentice's whereabouts by the boy's young friend, appeared greatly angered and agitated at the question, while a Christian wet nurse swore that she had seen the boy go down into a Jewish basement store and not come up again. However, as the author explains, because the wet nurse served the Jews against canon law (i.e. against the provisions of the 1179 Lateran Council) she had an ignominious status, rendering her testimony invalid, just as the boy's only friend in England, and the only person to care about his disappearance, was similarly discounted due to his being a minor (and, presumably, due to his class). We are told that the case went nowhere as: 'Gold contented the judges. Phineas gave and pleased, and the controversy ceased.' (Giles, pp. 59-64.)

It should be noted that Jewish scholar Anthony Bale considers this account to be a sophisticated satire of the genre, and there are clearly satirical additions to the story (e.g. the fictitious speech that the French Jew gives to the orphan about the importance of avoiding London for its preponderance of homosexuals and other undesirables). Bale also shows that the story has parallels with a 12th-century French manuscript [Bibliothèque Nationale MS Lat. 3177, fols 143v-145v] in which a young French Jewish boy makes an identical itinerary to Winchester, and is also strung up and tortured, before converting to Christianity. However, Roth (1941, p. 22) states of the case: 'The chronicler's sarcastic account, which has led to the suspicion that the whole story is fictitious, is grimly confirmed by a record of the expenses for escorting the Jews of Winchester to Westminster.' Roth's statement is based on an entry found in Stenton's *The Great Roll of the Pipe… 1193* (p. 134, see Translator's Bibliography), which indeed confirms that the Winchester Jews were transported from Winchester to Westminster to answer a charge, at the command of Master Philip. The tantalisingly brief Latin of the Pipe Roll reads: '*Et in custamento ducendi Iudeos Wint' á Wint' usque Westm' per preceptum magistri Philippi vii s. per idem breue. Et debet xxxv s. et j. d.*' However, the Jews' purported fine of 35s. 1d. is hardly a commensurate punishment for murder.

1202 – LINCOLN.

'The Jews of Lincoln are suspected when a child's murdered body is found in a pit outside of the city [walls], with a wound in its side.' However, there is no further information regarding what happened next, as the only source for this incident is the single entry in the Lincolnshire Assize Rolls, viz. '*Judei Lincolnie malecreduntur de paruo quodam qui inventus fuit in quadam fovea extra ciuitatem occisus sub latere suo vulneratus.*' See Stenton: *The Earliest Lincolnshire Assize Rolls*, § 996 [Translator's Bibliography].

1202 – BEDFORD.

This was not apparently a ritual killing (based on the information available), but the sexual sadism evident in this child murder is worth adding to the record. William Prynne, in *The Second Part of a Short Demurrer* (pp. 8-9), states the following:

> Amongst the Records in the Treasury of the Receiver of the Exchequer in the 4th year of King John [1202], I find one *Bonefand* a Jew indicted at *Bedford* for gelding and cutting off the yard of one *Richard*, whereof upon his trial he was acquitted: as the Record itself will more fully manifest in its own dialect.

Prynne then reproduces the original Latin source, which is poorly decipherable in the old print, however, the case is later taken up by Tovey in his 1738 *Anglia Judaica.* Elizabeth Pearl's translation into English (Pearl, p. 39) reads as follows:

> …in the fourth year of John's reign (1202), one Bonefand, a Jew of Bedford, was indicted not for circumcising, but for totally cutting off the private parts of a boy named Richard, the nephew of Robert de Sutton. According to Robert de Sutton, Bonefand had carried the child off to his house in Hacton and there had emasculated the poor child. Bonefand strenuously denied the charge and, after a payment of one mark to the King, was allowed a trial by jury. The jury found him not guilty, and Robert was ordered to pay a fine for bringing false charges.

That little Richard died is left in no doubt by the following entry (§ 59: Hundred of Clifton, p. 26) found in Volume I of *Select Pleas of the Crown* (ed. F. W. Maitland, The Selden Society, 1888):

> Robert of Sutton appeals Bonefand the Jew of Bedford, for that he in the king's peace and wickedly procured the shameful mutilation* of Richard, his [Robert's] nephew, whereof he died, so that he [Bonefand] had him carried to his [Bonefand's] land at Acton which he hold in gage, and there he died; and this he offers to prove etc. And Bonefand comes and defends the whole and offers the king a mark for an inquest whether he is guilty thereof or no. The jurors being questioned, say that he is not guilty thereof, and therefore let Bonefand be quit and Robert in mercy [fined] for a false appeal.
>
> [*In his own translation, Fowler (see below) uses an asterisked footnote at this juncture to gently clarify to his essentially Edwardian readership that this mutilation was one of genital removal, by stating in Latin: 'Id est, peni priuauit.']

A variant English translation, along with the Latin original, is also found in G. Herbert Fowler's *Roll of the Justices in Eyre at Bedford*, Vol. I, (§ 230), also published as 'The Bedford Eyre, 1202' in *The Publications of the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society,* Vol. I (1912).

It is to be noted that this case happened in the wake of King John's notorious Charter of 1201, which granted Jews special legal privileges over Christians, a factor which can only have impacted on the outcome of the trial. From D. H. Gifford's *The Jews in England. Exhibition of Records*:

> Confirmation by King John of the liberties granted to the Jews by Henry I, 10th April, 1201. Charter Roll (C. 53) 4, membrane 5: Among other privileges, a Jew could acquit himself in a court of law if he found one Jew and one Christian to testify to his innocence, or, if he could find no witnesses, by his own oath sworn on a scroll of the Hebrew Pentateuch.

An example of a case in which this very thing happens, is outlined in Rigg: *Select Pleas…*, p. 89, in which Abraham, son of Deulecresse, Jew, was called to answer to Simon de Graynvill and his wife, on a plea of not having paid for goods and services from both of them to the value of £100. Abraham appears before the court, denies all charges, and made his oath upon his 'Book of the Jewish Law'. 'And because the said Jew made his law as a Jew ought to make it against a Christian, to wit, single-handed upon his Book, therefore it is adjudged, that the said Abraham go quit thereof [i.e. be acquitted]. And the said Simon is in mercy [to be fined for bringing the case], as appears in the roll of Michaelmas Term next following.'

1225 – WINCHESTER.

Suzanne Bartlet, in her prosopographical study of the life of female Jewish financier Licoricia of Winchester, describes the incident of Licoricia's first husband, Abraham of Kent (also known as Abraham of Canterbury and Winchester), being accused, along with five other Jews, of murdering a Christian child in Winchester in 1225. From Bartlet, p. 25:

> …Abraham first appeared in Winchester in 1225 when he was accused with five others of murdering a Christian child. The co-accused are listed as another Abraham, Samarian, Benedict-cum-barbe, Abraham Pinche and his brother Elias of Winchester. Abraham of Canterbury and Winchester, Samuel or Samarian, and Benedict were found guilty and their detained chattels were confiscated. The other Abraham and the two Pinches were found innocent on their own submissions and their goods were returned to them. The question always arises as to how much bribery played a part in the seemingly inexplicable sentence in this and other cases of the day. All the accused would surely have pleaded their innocence, but perhaps their different treatment related to whether they had local connections, or powerful patrons. Equally unclear is what followed from this judicial finding. Samarian, purportedly found guilty, seems to have survived, and is still being mentioned in the records in 1244.

The original entries in the Latin Close Rolls, on which Barlet's analysis is based, can be found in *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum In Turri Londinensi Asservati*, Vol II, T. D. Hardy (1844), 9 Hen. III, pp. 50-1, (and p. 53 for the entry pertaining to the Deulesault case – see below). William Prynne has also transcribed a Latin Close Roll entry of the case, which can be found in his *Second Part of a Short Demurrer* (pp. 28-9). Prynne prefixes the Latin account with the following English gloss:

> Four Jews committed for killing an English man, were bailed and delivered to 9 other Jews, their bail, by this Writ in 9 H. 3 and their goods, writings, letters, rents seized in the interim.

In Prynne's Close Roll, dated the 12th July, of the 9th year of Henry III's reign (1225), the accused Jews are named as Abraham de Canterbury, Samaris fil Lumbard, Elias fil Chierie [Chere] and Abraham fil Aiare [Chere].[375] These appear to be four of the six Jews named above, minus the Abraham with no descriptive suffix, and Benedict-cum-barbe. The murder victim is named as 'Willi fil Rici, fil Gervasii' [William fitz Richard fitz Gervase]. Note that there is no record in Prynne's account of the nature of the killing, nor the eventual outcome for those found guilty. An objective scholar of breviographic Latin may shed more light on this case after inspection of the Close Roll entries listed above.

It should also be noted that this case is not to be confused (as seen in Hillaby, p. 90) with that of the murder charge against the 'King's Jew', Deulesault fil Soleus, in Winchester that same year. He was accused of murdering a young girl, but was later freed when the child was found alive.

1230 (REPORT OF THE PHENOMENON).

Reproduced verbatim from 'B. B.': *A Historical and Law Treatise…* (1702), p. 5:

> *Ralph* and *Samuel* (two *Jews*) who in the Year 1230, made a large Discovery of the many Christian Children, to the Number of 18, stoln and Crucified on *Good Fridays* by the *Jews*, gave the Names of the Childrens Parents, the Time when they were stollen, and where conceal'd, and when Crucified, and where Buried, all their Relations appeared in every part to be so True, that some of the *Jews* at the Place of their Execution did Confess the same, to the great Terror of the Christians, and great Confusion of the *Jews*. And that which render'd these Crimes the more Capital, and the more Unpardonable, was, That all the *Jews* then in *England*, Consented to the Crucifixion and Murther of so many Innocent Children, and that it was, and still is the principle of all the *Jews* in the Universe to do the like; and to this Day, it is Asserted by undeniable Authorities, that the *Jews* hold to the same Tenent, but by their Corruption and Briberies, most Jews escape Corporal Punishment.

375 It would appear that Chere (or Chera, as Bartlet renders it) was a prominent female Jewish usurer of Winchester, and two of her sons were implicated in this case. Bartlet gives the extant data known about Chera, her family, and business dealings, including the finance consortium formed with the Pinch family, one of whom was also accused.

1230 – NORWICH.

(*See also main text.*)

> Benedict the physician, pleas against Jacob, Jew of Norwich, because when Odard, his son, a boy of five years of age, was playing in the streets of Norwich four years ago, on the eve of St. Giles [i.e. August 31st, 1230], the same Jacob the Jew came and took the said Odard and he carried him to his house, and circumcised him in his member, and wanted to make him a Jew, and kept him for one day and one night in his house, until the cry of the neighbours brought Benedict to a certain house where he found his son in the hands of Jacob himself. Therefore he [Benedict] showed the circumcised boy to the officiating archdeacon and the coroners on that same day; who are present and testify this day that they saw the aforesaid boy circumcised, and who had his member thick and greatly swollen, and twisted as has already been stated. [*quod viderunt predictum puerum circumcisum, et qui habuit membrum suum grossum et valde inflatum, et ita aturnatum sicut predictum est*]

This above statement comes from the indictment made against a number of Norwich Jews at the 1234 Norfolk eyre. It was taken from the Placita Curia Regis Roll, 18 Hen. III, membrane 21, which can be found in full in its transcribed Latin form in Rigg (*Select Pleas.…*, pp. xliv-xlvii).[376]

The same roll also describes how the child Odard, who was nine years old by the time the case was eventually heard four years after the incident, was interrogated about what had happened to him:

> Afterwards the aforesaid boy, who was then 5 years old, and is now 9 years old, being asked how they circumcised him, says that they took him and brought him as far as Jacob's house, and one of them held him and covered his eyes, and another circumcised him with a knife; and afterward they took the piece which they had torn from his member, and put it in a kind of basin with sand, and searched for it with small skewers [*fusselletis*], until a certain Jew, who was called Jurnepin, found it first. And because the same Jurnepin found it first, they called him [Odard] Jurnepin.

The indictment then relates that after a day and a night being hidden, the boy escapes his captors, and is found by a certain Matilda de Burnham and her daughter sitting at the bank of a river crying and howling (*plorantem et ululantem*), saying that he was a Jew. The Christian woman took the boy into her own home ‘for the love of God’, and kept him there all night. Meanwhile, the Jews heard of the boy’s location, and went to take him back by force, but they were unsuccessful due to

376 It is clear that Rigg refrained from translating this most interesting document into English (unlike all of the other Latin documents, generally banal in content, which comprise his book) due to the nature of the case, which, as it included details of the boy’s genital injury, risked being jarring his readership’s Victorian sensibilities. (cf. Jessopp and James’ omission in translation of William’s circumcision in the 1896 *The Life and Miracle of William of Norwich*). The Rigg transcription of this document is the most reliable and easy to read, however, it can also be found in Prynne (Vol. 1, 2nd edition, pp. 19-22) and Rye (Appendix I, pp. 322-325; note that Rye has maintained the breviographic Latin).

the presence of several other Christian people in the house. Afterwards, a great multitude of Jews arrived to Matilde's house, and with great force tried to take him. However, more Christian neighbours had also since arrived to the house, and heard the Jews call the boy 'Jurnepin' and 'their Jew', but the Christians by force refused to let the boy go. Given their lack of success, the Jews then forbade Matilda from giving the boy pig flesh to eat. From the cited Curia Regis Roll:

> And the aforesaid Matilda, in whose house the child was found, came before the eyre justices, and her daughter with her. Similarly, they are aware that they are under oath, saying that they found the aforesaid child crying as aforesaid, and that for the love of God they kept him in their house, because they did not know whose son the child was, and because they saw the same child so weak that they thought he would soon die, and that the Jews thus came the next day, as had been said, but it would not have been known who the boy was but for a certain woman, who said that he was the son of Master Benedict, the physician, and the aforesaid Benedict came at the command of the aforesaid women, and hid himself in Matilde's own chamber, that he might hear what the aforesaid Jews were saying to his son, and they asked the boy his name, and the boy replied, out of fear of the Jews, that he was called Jurnepin.[377]

The indictment then tells of how the Jews appealed to Richard of Fressingfield, Constable of Norwich, in a bid to get 'Jurnepin' back, complaining to him 'that the Christians wanted to take their own Jew away from them'. In response, Fressingfield went to the house, where he found 'a great congregation of Christians and Jews', and the Jews complained to him that the Christians wished to take their Jew away from them, while Benedict the doctor contradicted them, saying that the boy was Odard, his son. Fressingfield did nothing beyond examine Odard's condition, and he later became a witness in the case. From the cited source:

> and whence he [Fressingfield] said that he saw the aforesaid Odard, son of the aforesaid Benedict, having had his member abscised, bloody, and grossly swollen [*habentem membrum suum abscisum, sanguinolentum, et grossum inflatum*], and he said that the Christians seized the aforesaid Odard, and took him out of their [i.e. the Jews'] hands.

The Jews then appealed to Simon de Berestrete and Nicholas Chese, the Bailiffs of Norwich, who likewise scrutinised the boy's injury, but also apparently did nothing to further the Jews' cause. The child was also shown to the officiating archdeacon and the coroners on the day that his father rescued him. These officials examined him and afterwards testified as to his state. From the cited source:

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377 Note that the Matthew Paris version varies slightly from the Curia Regis Roll, as, according to Paris: 'the father of the boy who had been stolen by the Jews, after diligently searching for his son, finally found him locked up in the Jews' custody. And with raised cries he told of his son, whom he believed he had lost, had been kept in a room of a certain Jew.' Readers may notice the parallels between this divergent version of the tale, and Paris' similarly divergent tale of how the body of Hugh of Lincoln had been found. In Matthew's defence, if one only read the father's complaint as presented in the roll, one would be forgiven for assuming that the 'certain house' in which Benedict found his son must have been the abductor's house, rather than that of a Christian third party. The monk's lack of intimacy with case details may also be surmised from the fact that in his telling of the tale, the Jews name the boy 'Jurmin'.

> And the officiating archdeacon came before the eyre justices with a great retinue of priests, who all swore by the Word of God that the aforesaid boy had been circumcised just as it was said, and by the aforesaid Jews, and that they had seen the aforesaid boy recently circumcised, his member having been thick, and very swollen and bloody [*et quod viderunt predictum puerum recenter circumcisum, habentem membrum suum grossum, et valde inflatum et sanguinolentum*].

The indictment also states that the justices themselves inspected the boy, four years after the event, 'and it was clear that he had been circumcised'. As barrister-at-law James Macmullen Rigg writes of this case, the evidence for Odard's abduction and circumcision is 'abundant and consistent'(xxviii), and therefore the only question which remains is that of why this act took place.[378]

Many traditional sources,[379] whether derived ultimately from the Matthew Paris account (*Reservabant autem illum ad crucifigendum*) or the Roger of Wendover account (*volentes eum crucifigere in solennitate Paschali*), or based on existing English beliefs,[380] state that Odard's kidnap and circumcision were in preparation for a subsequent Paschal crucifixion, which would have taken place had the boy not escaped. The eventual severe punishment of several of the Jews involved, who were drawn and hanged, would indicate that this too had been the view of the court, although antiquarian Walter Rye has thrown plausible doubt on this hypothesis for the Jews' actions (main text, footnote 199). Blomefield (Vol. II, p. 33) cites as evidence for the circumcision being a prelude to crucifixion the fact that there was no other reason for the child to be concealed. He also refutes the argument made by rabbi Menasseh ben Israel in his 1656 *Vindiciae Judaeorum*, namely, that the circumcision would never been done as a 'Prank' because the 'strict Law-observing Jews… dare not make a Sport of one of the Seals of their Covenant', by reminding his readership that St. William of Norwich was circumcised prior to crucifixion.

Apropos of Blomefield's argument, it is clear that in certain Jewish communities some superstitious and seemingly bizarre practices have grown up around the circumcision ritual, which to outside eyes may indeed appear to be Jews 'making sport' of the rite. The following reports lend

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378 Likewise, Walter Rye states: '… we may take it for granted that the child was actually circumcised, and by the Jews' (Rye, p. 319), although he does not believe that this was a prelude to the child's murder.

379 These sources include Blomefield, Fabian, Holinshed, Speed, and Foxe. Blomefield helpfully accurately reproduces the (brief) Fabian, Holinshed, and Speed reports within his own, while the John Foxe report can be found in Vol. I of his *Acts and Monuments* (p. 475 in the 1875 Cumming edition). Note that Fabian's and Holinshed's reports of the boy being a year old are erroneous, according to the Chancery records, which put the child at five years old. Likewise, the Roger de Wendover and Holinshed reports err in stating that the boy was abducted by the Jews for 'a whole year'. Both Fabian and Holinshed name one 'John Toly' as the complainant in the case, but provide no other data as to his identity.

380 This belief may have its origins in William of Norwich having apparently been forcibly circumcised before death, and the historical record does not speak for the other cases in England, but these may have informed popular perceptions in this regard. John Weever's *Ancient Funerall Monuments* (1631) confirms that circumcision was commonly considered to have been part of the alleged child sacrifice ritual in medieval England, as he states on page 377: 'The Conquerour William brought with him from Roane [Rouen] in Normandy certaine Jewes, whose posterity here inhabiting within the prime Cities of the kingdome, did use sometimes to steale away, circumcise, crowne with thornes, whip, torture, and crucifie some one of their neighbours male children, in mockery, despite, scorne, and derision of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, crucified by the Jewes in Jerusalem.' Researchers may be aware that circumcision has also been recorded in the following European ritual murder cases: Andreas [Oxner] of Rinn, 1462; Simon [Gerber] of Trent, 1475; Lorenzino Sossio of Valrovina, 1485; Michael Piesenharter of Sappenfeld, 1540; Franz Locherer of Eppan, 1744; Fedor Emelyanov of Velizh, 1823; Mikhail Maslow and Feofan Sherstobitov, both of Saratov, 1852.

credibility to the Odard's testimony that the Jews played a game with his recently severed foreskin in a basin of sand. From page 99 of Ariel Toaff's *Blood Passover*:

> One form of magical cannibalism, related to circumcision, may be found in a custom highly widespread among both the Ashkenazi Jewish communities and Jewish communities of the Mediterranean region. The women present at the circumcision ceremony but not yet blessed with progeny of the male sex, anxiously awaited the cutting of the foreskin of the child. At this point, throwing inhibition to the winds, as if at a pre-established signal, the women hurled themselves upon that piece of bloody flesh. The luckiest woman is alleged to have snatched it up and gulped it down immediately, before she could be mobbed by the competing females, who must have been no less hardened and highly motivated.

From page 170 of Joshua Trachtenberg's *Jewish Magic and Superstition*:

> A Geonic source is cited as authority for this practice: the bloody foreskin was placed in a bowl containing water and spices, and each member of the congregation, as he left the synagogue (where the rite used to be performed), would bathe his hands and face. A late work suggests, as a 'wonderful charm,' that during the days preceding the rite the foreskin of a child previously circumcised be put into the mouth of the infant who is about to undergo the operation.

Due to the nature of the case, the justices at the eyre, finding the evidence against the Jews conclusive, passed the matter up to the king for judgement in Parliament, who sent an instruction for the indicted Jews to be sent 'with all haste to London, to deliver them there to the Constabulary of our Tower of London'.[381] Roger of Wendover's chronicle entry for 1235[382] gives as seven the number of Jews who were brought before the king at Westminster to answer the charges, who 'having confessed the truth of the matter in the king's presence, thus remained in prison custody'. However, the aforementioned Curia Regis Roll reveals that such a case had hitherto never come before the royal court, and with no precedent on the law books (such an act being completely out of the scope of normal Anglo-Saxon behaviour), the king, after hearing the case along with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the greater part of the barons and bishops, wished to turn it over to the ecclesiastical court. It would appear that the Jews paid 100 marks for a respite of judgement as well as £200, and later £20, in a bid to avoid this eventuality, and to ensure that the trial was conducted according to the standard set the Exchequer of the Jewry for cases between Jews and Christians, namely, that the jury be composed of equal parts Jews and Christians. However, the king, after first agreeing to this plan in January 1240, dismissed it a month later,[383] after realising

381 Quoted from Fine Roll 19 Henry III, membrane 15, reproduced in Prynne's *The Second Part of a Short Demurrer*, pp. 34-35. This entry reveals that the Jewish prisoners were made to pay a hundred marks towards the costs of their own transportation, and shows (along with a similar entry from Close Roll 19 Henry III, membrane 23, reproduced in *ibid*), that the sheriff of Norfolk received the order to transport the prisoners on November 21st, 1234.

382 *Rogeri de Wendover Chronica, Sive Flores Historiarum* (ed. Coxe, 1842), Vol. IV, p. 324.

383 See Rye, p. 317, for details of the King's writs directed to the Norfolk eyre which evidence both this initial decision and his change of heart.

that, as the jurors would vote along ethnic lines, the jury would be hung, and the case would remain unresolved.[384] The king therefore passed the case back to the eyres justices at Norfolk, instructing them to proceed 'as best you see fit' (*prout melius videritis expedire, faciatis*).[385]

It should be noted that it is also on record that the Jewish leadership offered the king a mark of gold in order to inspect the child themselves, to ensure that circumcision had indeed taken place. That this was requested suggests that Odard's abduction may have been done by a limited number of Jews, who acted without the knowledge or approval of the community leaders. Alternatively, as Rokéah suggests, they may have hoped to be able to argue that the circumcision had not been done according to the Jewish standard (i.e. there were shreds of skin remaining), and by this means argue that, as the circumcision was 'invalid', the charge should be reduced from one of circumcision (which brought with it the severity of 'contempt of the Crucifix and Christianity') to one of actual bodily harm.[386] If this was indeed their strategy, it was unsuccessful.

Of the thirteen Jews apparently indicted (ten appearing at the eyre hearing, the remaining three still in prison from the time of the abduction),[387] Rye notes that, according to the documentation he has surveyed, three of these Jews can be reliably ascertained as having been convicted, with two of these (Mosse f. Abraham/Mosse Mokke and Isaac Parvus/fil Solomon) being hanged, and the third, Senioret (having fled at the time of the incident) being outlawed for felony in 1231.[388] Lipman also points to a Close Roll entry of 1240 which records the transfer of the ownership of the house belonging to 'Theor, Jew of Norwich, hanged for the circumcision of a certain Christian boy',[389] which would bring the number of confirmed hanged to three.[390] However Matthew Paris (*Chronica Majora*, Vol. IV, pp. 30-31, Vol. III, p. 543), as well as Florence of Worcester (Forester, p. 322) give the number of men drawn and hanged as four, and taking place in 1240. From the latter source: 'At Norwich, four Jews, being charged with divers atrocities, were torn asunder by horses, and, at length, hanged. The principal charge was that they had circumcised a certain Christian boy according to the Jewish rite.'

In 1603, John Stow wrote the following in his *Survey of London* (§ Newgate, § Coleman Street Ward; pp. 35 and 289 in the 1912 Wheatley edition):

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384 An example which neatly demonstrates how multi-ethnic/multi-racial states can never function with any kind of equity in the long term.

385 See *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III… A. D. 1237-1242*, p. 175 (24 Hen III, 1240, m. 16).

386 Indeed, Rokéah, ('The State, The Church…', p. 109) argues that the phrase in the indictment ('*Et visus est puer, et membrum ejus visum est pelle coopertum ante in capite*') which so mystified Rigg, is the statement made by the Jews that the bottom of the boy's glans penis was still slightly covered, the implication being that the circumcision was incomplete (and thus invalid as such). For more information about the exacting 'Jewish standard' of circumcision, which has been written about extensively in Jewish religious texts, see idem. p. 122, n. 52.

387 The names of the thirteen can be found in Rye (p. 315), Lipman (p.60) and Rigg (p. xliv). The jurors found that all of the thirteen were consenting parties to the act, with the exception of Mossy fil Solomon.

388 In Volume I (p. 171, § 522) of the *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery)* (London, 1916), we find that a Norwich messuage belonging to this Senioret (here spelled Seymiret) was given by the king to Benedict, Odard's father. The entry notes both that the Jew was 'outlawed for felony' and 'outlawed for the circumcision of Odard', which leaves no doubt as to the nature of the felony committed.

389 *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III… A. D. 1237-1242*, p. 247 (25 Hen III, 1240, m. 19). Lipman theorises that the name 'Theor' is a corruption of 'Diaia' (?), which would correspond to Diaia le Cat in his list of the accused (note that Rye transcribes this name as Byay Le Kat, and it is seen later in Lipman as Diay le Chat), but we may also look to the name Joppe fil Th… in Lipman's list, which Rye completes as 'fil Thea', as the possible original owner of the apparently ill-fated house.

390 Lipman (p. 61-2) also discerns from the documentation that Simon f. Sarra is mentioned as charged and dead, Josce f. Senioret as condemned, while another eleven Jews (whose name are given by Lipman) are listed as fugitives. As Lipman writes after giving this list of names: 'The true story behind this case is not easy to determine.'

> Moreover, in the year 1241, the Jews of Norwich were hanged for circumcising a Christian child; their house called the Thor was pulled down and destroyed; Aaron the son of Abraham, a Jew at London, and the other Jews, were constrained to pay 20,000 marks at two terms in the year, or else to be kept perpetual prisoners in Newgate of London, and in other prisons.[391]
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> The 20th [regnal year] of this Henry [i.e. 1235-6] seven Jews were brought from Norwich, which had stolen a christened child, had circumcised, and minded to have crucified him at Easter, wherefore their bodies and goods were at the king's pleasure; the 26th [regnal year, i.e. 1241-2], the Jews were constrained to pay to the king twenty thousand marks, at two terms in the year, or else to be kept in perpetual prison.[392]

Meanwhile, in more modern times, Rigg (p. xlvii) writes of the outcome of the trial: 'Four prisoners, probably all that were tried, were convicted and executed. Death is a heavy penalty for mayhem; but it must be borne in mind that the deed was believed to have been done *in despectu Crucfixi et Christianitatis*, i.e. as preliminary to a ritual murder.'

For more information on the case, see in particular Walter Rye (*Norfolk Antiquarian Miscellany*, Vol. II, pp. 312-344), Vivian A. Lipman (*The Jews of Medieval Norwich*, pp. 59-62) and James Macmullen Rigg (*Select Pleas.…*, pp. xxii, xxvii, xxviii, xliv-xlvii). Rye goes through the extant documentation generated by the legal proceedings, and for Latinists reproduces the various Chancery Rolls in their original breviographic Latin as an appendix to the main study. Lipman also covers the fraught relations between the Jewish and Christian communities of Norwich in the years following the incident, including two incidents of fire-raising in the Jewish quarter (see also Rye, Appendix XXVI). As can be appreciated, the difference of years variously reported for the 1230 incident (leading some sources to mistakenly believe that two crimes were committed) is easily explained by the fact that the case dragged on for eleven years, and documentation generated at any point during that time could understandably have given a false impression to a later chronicler.[393]

391 As previously stated, this house 'called the Thor' is likely the house which had belonged to the hanged Jew named Theor in the 1240 Close Roll.

392 As has already been shown, the evidence points to the prisoners being transported to London in Henry's 19th regnal year, as the order for transportation was given in November 1234.

393 For example, Matthew Paris gives the reader the impression that the abduction took place in 1240, while Prynne reproduces the Paris account dated 1240, after retelling an account dated 1235 from Holinshed, Speed, Fabian etc. This could give any unwary reader the impression that there had been two separate cases, five years apart.

1232 – WINCHESTER.

According to a 1236 Hampshire eyre roll, a corpse of a one-year-old baby boy had been found in the churchyard of St. Swithun's. He had been strangled to death, his eyes had been gouged out, his hands and feet cut off, his heart removed, and he had been castrated. The boy [named Stephen] had allegedly been sold by his wet nurse (*nutrix*) to Abraham Pinch, a Jew. According to the eyre roll, Abraham and other Jews (names unknown) killed the boy in Abraham's house. Henry of Bath (*Henricus de Bathonia*) took all of Winchester's Jews into custody. The wet nurse fled. Around Pentecost the child's mother Emma was gaoled on suspicion but escaped, fled to a church, and, cognisant of what had happened, abjured the kingdom. In the same eyre roll, Abraham Pinch was also accused of stealing.[394]

According to Gifford (p. 8), with regards to the baby's mother: '…the jurors declared that she was ill at the time when the murder was committed by the Jew, Abraham Pinch, to whom the boy was sold, and by other unknown Jews, and that she knew nothing about the deed.' If it is also true that she later abjured the realm, then it suggests that she fled out of confusion or terror.

Pinch was eventually hanged for felony in 1236.[395] He was drawn and hanged [*tractus et suspensus*] by order of the king, however, what is particularly interesting is that the king denied the felon a burial in the Jewish cemetery, ordering instead that the local sheriff instruct the Jews to bury Pinch beneath the gallows where he had been hanged.[396] This would suggest a very serious (unholy?) crime. Suzanne Bartlet (p. 43) describes this denial of a Jewish burial 'unique' in her research of medieval Jewry in England, and adds: 'There seems to be no other instance of this; a Jewish burial was a fundamental requirement of the religion, exceeding even the need for a synagogue in importance.' Pinch's chattels and property, including the synagogue, were escheated to the crown, and most of the extant records which treat of this case concern the disposal of the dead man's property.[397] When the accusation of child murder was made, all of the town's leading Jews were gaoled, perhaps as much for their own protection as for their suspected involvement in the crime, but they were released in 1234 after they had been presented before the king to make their defence,[398] and had made the standard payment of 20 marks. Pinch appears to have been the only person punished for this crime, if indeed this was the case. Suzanne Bartlet, who takes an apologist view of ritual murder, suggests that the accusation of theft against Pinch, a prominent usurer, was 'a trumped-up charge' which was 'possibly indicative of sustained campaign against him by persons unknown' although she admits that his unpopularity may have been due to his involvement in 'some rather questionable business practices, and more probably in the fact that he seemed to have gotten

394 This information is taken from Rokéah's *Crime and Justice*… pp. 100, 154-6, which includes the reproduction of the original Latin text (PRO Just I/775/20) of both the child murder allegation and the theft charge.

395 '*Abraham Pinch, Judei, qui nuper suspensus fuit pro felonia*', from *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III… A.D. 1234-1237:* p. 239 (membrane 17, 20 Henry III, 9th Feb, 1236).

396 *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III… A.D. 1234-1237:* p. 341 (membrane 17d, 20 Henry III, 10th Feb, 1236). It should be noted that although the record would indicate (due to the word *Suhampt'*) that this took place in nearby Southampton, with the sheriff of Southampton receiving the order, *Suhampt'* was often a scribal abbreviation for 'Southamptonshire' (i.e. Hampshire) as well as for Southampton itself. It is an interesting coincidence that the Jews were expelled from Southampton in the same year that Pinch was hanged.

397 *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III… A.D. 1234-1237:* p. 239 (membrane 17, 20 Henry III, 9th Feb, 1236), p. 271 (membrane 11, 20 Henry III, 1236); *Calendar of Charter Rolls, Vol I. Henry III, A. D. 1226-1257*: p. 218 (membrane 6, 27th Feb, 1236).

398 *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III… A. D. 1231-1234*: p. 80 (membrane 8, 16 Henry III, June 25th, 1232).

away with them and to have been hugely successful'.[399] Pinch had also been one of the accused in the 1225 ritual murder case.

Dates for the murder vary. Hillaby (p. 86), puts the date of the murder at October 17th, 1232, while the Winchester Annals [*Annales Monastici,* Vol. II, p. 86] reports that in 1231: 'A certain boy named Stephen was tortured and killed by the Jews of Winchester on November 16th.' (*Puer quidam, nomine Stephanus, cruciatus est et occisus a Judaeis Wyntoniae XVI kal Novembris.*)

There is not a great deal of extant information about the case, perhaps because no cult of martyrdom was established after little Stephen's murder.

1239 – LONDON

Matthew Paris (*Chronica Majora*, Vol. III, p. 543) reports that in London, in 1239, 'a certain homicide committed in the city by a clan of Jews' (*quoddam homicidium in civitate a Judaeis clanculo perpetratum*) caused great anger among the local populace, which led to a severe backlash against the Jews as a group, who suffered 'great extermination and destruction' (*exterminium magnum et destructionem*) on St. Alban's day and the day after (i.e. 22-23rd June, 1239). The homicide which sparked the riot may or may not be the same 'manslaughter' which Margoliouth (main text, n. 42) reports as being judged in London in 1240, which led to the Jews losing the king's favour, and for which they were collectively fined £2,000. It should be noted however that although the Matthew Paris report features in Desportes' book about Jewish ritual murder (*Le mystère du sang.*…, p. 66), there is nothing to indicate that the homicide (or homicides) described in either of the above sources involved any ritual motivation or element.

1244 – LONDON.

> On the first of August in this year [1244] the body of a boy was found unburied in the graveyard of St. Benedict [i.e. St. Benet's Church] in the city of London; on his legs and arms and under the breast regular Hebrew characters were inscribed.* Many people assembled in amazement at the sight, and being unable to read the letters but knowing they were Hebrew sent for some converted Jews who inhabited the house which the king had founded at London [the *Domus Conversorum*]; and commanded them as they loved life and limb, for the honour, love and fear of their lord the king to interpret the writing without deceit; and there were present some royal bailiffs who were keepers of the peace. They also thought, and not without reason, that the Jews had as a taunt and insult to Jesus Christ crucified the boy – a circumstance stated to have constantly happened – or had tortured him in various ways prior to crucifixion, and when he died as a result, had thrown him there as unworthy of a cross. Furthermore there were on the body livid marks and weals caused by rods, with evident signs and traces of other

399 Bartlet, p. 42. See *ibid.* for more on the life and business dealing of Abraham Pinch (or 'Pinche') and his associates.

> torture. The converts were brought to read the inscription and endeavoured to do so thoroughly; now through the extension and contraction of the skin and flesh the letters were dragged on this side and on that, and were much distorted, and some were illegible; however, the names of the boy's father and mother without the surname were found, and a statement that the boy had been sold to Jews, but to whom or for what purpose they could not discover. Meantime, some of the Jews of London suddenly and secretly took flight whereby they brought on themselves merited suspicion. Some declared that the Lord worked miracles on the boy's behalf. And when it was ascertained that the Jews had sometimes done such deeds, and that holy crucified bodies had been received into a church and become renowned by miracles, although the marks of the five wounds were not visible on the hands, feet, and side, the canons of St. Paul seized the body and buried it with full ceremony in their own church near the great altar.

*note that the phrase 'was inscribed' (*fuit inscriptum*) could mean that the Hebrew letters were written onto the child's skin (for example) with ink, but it could also signify that the skin was scored or punctured to make the marks. The Latinist and legal scholar James Macmullen Rigg appears to believe that it was the latter interpretation, when he writes 'some punctures resembling Hebrew letters' were discovered on the corpse (*Select Pleas*, xxviii).

The above is the fullest known account of the incident as recorded contemporaneously by the monk Matthew Paris (*Chronica Majora*, Vol. IV., pp. 377-8), translated into English by William Holden Hutton for his 1887 book *The Misrule of Henry III* (pp. 91-3, albeit with some minor changes made for clarity). We can be sure that the account is contemporary because Paris died in 1259, and it may be the primary source from which all other sources derive. That said, tradition states that the murdered child was a baby, although the origins of this assertion are unknown. John Weever's *Ancient Funerall Monuments* of 1631 (p. 378) situates this church in Paul's Wharf [which would make this the original St. Benet's Church of Paul's Wharf, Bennet's Hill, City of London] but also gives the year of the event as 1223, and confirms that the child was extensively tortured, but not crucified. Rigg (*Select Pleas…*, p. 113) states that the Jews were fined 60,000 marks, payable over five years, for the crime.

Another medieval scribe, continuing the chronicling work of Gervase of Canterbury after the latter's death, may also have been writing relatively close to events when he included in the latter's chronicle for the year 1245: 'A certain boy was crucified by the Jews of London, and miracles followed his passion.' [*Quidam puer a Judaeis Lundoniis crucifigitur, cujus passionem miracula secuta sunt.*] From *The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury* (Stubbs, Vol. II, p. 202).

1248 – WYCOMBE.

'The Jew, Aaron of Wycombe, was reported in 1248 to have been accused and outlawed because of the death of a child (*cuiusdam pueri*) in Wycombe. His chattels had been seized for the king's use by the then justices of the Jewry, William of St. Edmund's and Thomas of Newark.' Taken from one of the Buckinghamshire justice and assize rolls studied by Rokéah (*Crime and Jews in Late Thirteenth-Century England*, p. 99). This incident may not have been a ritual murder (or murder of *odium fidei*), but has been included here should further information become available.

1255 – LINCOLN.

(*See also main text*.) The most (in)famous of the purported Jewish ritual murder cases of England is that of Little St. Hugh of Lincoln, also known as St. Hugh the Less, both diminutives used to distinguish the child martyr from the bishop St. Hugh of Lincoln. Of the four extant primary sources for the case, the report by Matthew Paris is the most well known. This extract from Paris' report of the case (*Chronica Majora*, ed. Luard, Vol. V, pp. 516-519) draws on the various English translations found in the secondary literature (Hume, Hill [Hutton], Jacobs),[400] elements of which have been blended together for maximum accuracy and intelligibility:

> This year [1255], about the feast of the apostles Peter and Paul [July 27th], the Jews of Lincoln stole a boy called Hugh, who was about 8 years old. After shutting him up in a secret chamber where they fed him on milk and other childish food, they sent to almost all the cities of England in which Jews were living, and summoned some of their sect from each city to be present at a sacrifice to take place at Lincoln, in reproach and contempt of Jesus Christ. For they had, as they affirmed, had a boy concealed for the purpose of having him crucified. Therefore a great number of them assembled at Lincoln, and then they appointed a Jew of Lincoln as judge, as it were, to represent Pilate, by whose sentence, and with the concurrence of all, the boy was subjected to various tortures. They scourged him till the blood gushed forth, and his body became black, they crowned him with thorns, mocked him, and spat upon him; they each pierced him with knives, which are called 'Anelatii' [anelace daggers], they made him drink gall, they scoffed at him with blasphemous insults, and gnashed their teeth at him as they called him 'Jesus, the False Prophet'. And after tormenting him in diverse ways they crucified him, and pierced him to the heart with a lance. When the boy was dead, they took the body down from the cross, and for some reason disembowelled it; it is said to be used in their magic rites.[401]
>
> But the boy's mother sought her absent son for several days; and the neighbours told her that they had last seen him playing with some Jewish boys of his own age, and going

400 A lively English translation, along with a list of sources, is also found in Prynne's *Short Demurrer* (Vol. I, pp. 26-29 /Vol. II, pp. 29-33). Note that Prynne, as Hume, translates 'puteum' as 'pit', whereas Hutton (copied by Hill and likely Jacobs), translates it as 'well'. Later, in his theory on Hugh's death, Jacobs transforms this well into a 'cesspool'.

401 I could find no evidence (in English-language sources) of the Jews ever having practiced anthropomancy. The nearest reference I can find to the medieval Jewish use of entrails in magical rites is that of the Kapparot ritual, the killing of the rooster which is clearly a substitute for human sacrifice: '*gever*' being the Hebrew word for both 'rooster' and 'man', makes one a substitute for the other in sympathetic magic terms. In the words of Tractenberg (*Jewish Magic and Superstition*, pp. 164-5), 'the substitution of fowl for man in inescapable'. In this ritual, at least as it was practiced by the medieval Ashkenazim, the bird's entrails would be thrown onto the roof to ward off evil spirits (*ibid.*), and the evisceration of the sacrificed bird (for the entrails to be fed to other birds) is still mandated practice today (Bloch, p. 159). That little Hugh was a real *gever* 'scapegoat' may be stretching credibility, particularly as the Kapparot rite is performed on the eve of Yom Kippur, which has a variable date falling between mid-September/mid-October, and Hugh's body was found near the end of August (traditionally, he was murdered on August 27th, which later became his feast day in the church, and found on August 29th). It is also a hypothesis that Paris's detail of disembowelment is an echo of the ancient ritual murder allegation made by Apion, described by Josephus in Book II, Paragraph 8 of *Contra Apionem* [Against Apion]*:* that every year a Greek was fattened up and ritually sacrificed by the Jews, who ate then part of the Greek's entrails while swearing an oath of enmity towards the Greek people, before casting the remains of the body into a pit.

into the house of a certain Jew. So the mother with all haste went to the Jew's house, and there beheld the boy's body lying in a well; the bailiffs of the city were then quickly summoned, and the body was found and drawn up. It was a remarkable sight which then presented itself to the people; the mother's cries and lamentations provoked all the citizens assembled there to tears and sighs. There was present John of Lexington, a man of learning, wise and prudent, who said, 'We have sometimes heard that the Jews have dared to attempt such deeds in insult of our crucified Lord Jesus Christ.' He then addressed the Jew whose house the boy had entered whilst at play, and who, as being for that reason a greater object of suspicion, had been arrested: 'Wretched man, dost thou not know that an immediate death awaits thee? All the gold in England would not suffice to ransom or save thee. Yet unworthy though thou art, I will tell thee how thou canst save thy life and limb from destruction. Both of these things I shall secure to thee, if without one word of falsehood, thou fearest not to lay open to me all the particulars of the case.' Then the Jew, whose name was Copin, thinking that he had found a way of escape, answered: 'My lord John, if thou makest good what thou hast promised, I will disclose to thee wondrous matters.' Then John turned his attention to what the Jew had to say, and the Jew continued: 'What the Christians say is true. Almost every year the Jews crucify one boy in injury and insult to Jesus. But one is not found every year, for they practice this secretly and in most remote and concealed places. This boy, whom they call Hugh, our Jews unmercifully put to death, and after he was dead, and wished to hide his corpse, they could not bury or conceal it.' (This they wished to do, as the body of an innocent boy was considered useless for augury, which was the reasons for disembowelling it.) 'And in the morning, when they thought it was hidden away, the earth vomited and cast it forth, and there it lay unburied on the ground to the horror of the Jews. At length they threw it into a well, but still they could not hide it, for the mother never wearied in her search, and finding the body informed the bailiffs.'

Nevertheless, John kept the Jew bound in chains, and when these things came to the knowledge of the Canons of Lincoln Cathedral, they requested that the body be given to them, and the request was granted. After displaying it to an immense number of people, they buried it in the cathedral, with the honour due to a precious martyr. Be it known also that the Jews kept the child alive for ten days and, being fed for so many days on milky pap, he was able to endure various forms of torture.

When the King [Henry III] had returned from the North of England, and was apprised of what had happened, he rebuked John for having promised life and limb to such a wicked being, which he had no right to do, saying: 'that blasphemer and murderer deserved to suffer the punishment of death many times over.' And when the irrevocable sentence was impending over the accused, the guilty man said, 'My death is imminent, nor can John give me any assistance. I will tell the truth to you all. Nearly all the Jews in England agreed to the death of this boy, and from nearly every English city in which Jews live, a select number were chosen to be present at this sacrifice as a Paschal offering.' And when he had thus spoken, he was bound to a horse's tail and dragged to the gallows, where he was delivered body and soul to the devils of the air. The other Jews who had been accomplices in this deed, 91 in number, were taken to London, and cast into prison. And if perchance they were deplored by some of the Christians, they were lamented by the Caursini [their rivals in the traffic of usury] without a single tear.

While broadly confirming the details of the above report, the much more extensive version in the Burton Annals, which exceeds eight pages of text in the 1864 Luard edition (*Annales Monastici*, Vol. I, pp. 340-348, 371), also differs or extrapolates on certain details. For example, Copin, or Jopin in the Burton text,[402] lures the child into his house near sunset on the Vigil of St Peter's Chains (July 31st), and then keeps him hidden in a private room, where he is starved (rather than fattened up) for 26 days (instead of ten), until the point of the child's inanition. We are also told that, at the point of the torture, before crucifying him (p. 341), the Jews 'surrounded the boy, stripped him, scourged him with whips, spat in his face, cut off the cartilage of his nose along with his upper lip, and broke his upper teeth'. Then, when little Hugh had been put on the cross, to an onslaught of insults and gnashing of teeth, 'they pricked the tender body of said child from the sole of the foot to the top with minute and sharp needles, so that the whole body was bleeding with wounds, and the wounds inflicted on his body resembled the skin of a hedgehog' before the boy's life was ended with a lance-wound through his side.

The Burton Annals also suggests that the body was not found in a well on Jewish property, but rather that the well was at some distance from the Jews' dwelling place, as the following phrase would indicate: '…in the silence of the dead of the night, they [the Jews] took the lifeless body most secretly, and threw it into a certain well, and departed stealthily' (p. 342). There is also no indication that the mother found the body, which is also the case in the Waverley Annals and the contemporaneous Anglo-Norman ballad *Passio Pueri Hugonis de Lincolnia*, which treats of the case over 93 verses and evidences more local knowledge than the chronicles.[403] Of the four contemporary sources, only the *Chronica Majora* states that the well was on Jewish property, and that the body was found by the boy's widowed mother. The Waverley Annals states that the boy was thrown into a 'certain drinking well' [*in puteum quendam, aquam ad potandum continentem*], which would appear to be on common land, given that the body was found by Christian passersby. Indeed, Lincoln tradition had it that the body was found in Grantham's Well in Newport, which was reputedly just beyond Newport arch (i.e. outside of the ancient Roman city walls). This distant positioning of the well is also supported by the Anglo-Norman ballad, which states that the well was '*Hors de Nichole la cité*' (outside of the city of Lincoln, verse 45) and '*Derère le chastel envers le west*' (behind the castle towards the west, verse 86) although in the ballad the Jews have the Christian wet nurse transport the body, which is discovered by chance the following day when a Christian woman goes to the well to draw water (i.e. there are no 'divine signs' to attract passersby, as in the Waverley Annals). This well appeared to be still in existence when Dr. William Stukeley described it (along with its legend) in his *Itinerarium Curiosum* of 1724 ('there is a well still call'd *Grantham*'s well', p. 85), but it appears to have already become a part of bygone history when, in

402 Rigg (*Select Pleas*, xxxi) theorises that the name Copin or Jopin is a medieval scribe's rendering of Joscepin, however the *Publications of the Lincoln Record Society* (Vol. 51, p. 90), states that Copin was a diminutive form of Jacob, and makes a case for the legendary Copin/Jopin having been a certain Lincoln Jew called Jacob fil. Leo, the son of Leo fil. Salon (Solomon), not least because Jacob fil. Leo was one of the nineteen Jews hanged for the crime (note that his father was another of the nineteen hanged). To avoid confusion, from this point on in the text (outside of direct quotations from sources that state otherwise), the individual concerned shall be referred to as 'Copin', even though there is an equally valid argument for 'Jopin' (also a diminutive of Jacob) being the legitimate rendering of his name.

403 For example, it states that Hugh was born in the Dernestall, an area now known as St. Dunstan's Lock, corresponding approximately to to north end of Lincoln High Street and the south end of the Strait. Further north, following this same street, one reaches the start (bottom) of Steep Hill, where most of the Jews were reputed to live. Steep Hill is also the location of Jews Court, the place where one popular tradition has that Hugh's body was found.

1805, it was mentioned on page 175 of W. C. Oulton's *The Traveller's Guide, or English Itinerary* ('there was, till lately, a well here, named *Grantham's Well…*').[404]

If this was the case, i.e. that the body was not found on Jewish property, then we must assume that it was the extensive injuries found on the child's body, as well as Copin's confession, that served as proof of Jewish foul play. The Jewish scholar Joseph Jacobs has theorised that the child's death was caused by his accidentally falling into a well on Jewish property, where it lay putrefying for days or even weeks, and the Jews may have been implicated in the crime because they had been caught dumping the body into Grantham's Well. He explains the disembowelling with the conjecture that the stomach contents may have burst when the Jews had moved the putrefied body.

This theory, however, does not encompass the fact that the body would evidence wounds consistent with ritual murder, and here we turn to verses 64-67 of the Anglo-Norman ballad, for which the Rev. Abraham Hume (pp. 50-1) has provided us with a surprisingly accurate English translation in rhyming verse (note that Hume has similarly used an antiquated English style to mimic the spirit of the Norman French original, which he provides alongside his English translation for comparison). We are at the point in the ballad where the child's body, which has been discovered naked and covered in filth after having initially been dumped in a privy, has been borne back into Lincoln by a crowd of townsfolk:

> At the moment, a convert, who stood beside,
> Addressing the multitude, loudlie cried:
> 'Methinks you would wish to be satisfied,
> Of the manner in which this infant died.
>
> Let water be heted without delaye,
> To wash the filth from the bodie away;
> I suspect we shal shortlie be able to say
> What means wer devised the child to slay.'
>
> Then soon the bodie was clensed anew,
> As the convert had counseled them to doe,
> When all in a moment, 'twas plaine to view,
> That the bloody deede was done by a Jewe.
>
> The very same woundes which God had known,
> On the corpse of the infant here were shown.
> Oh, grete was the tumult with every one
> Whan these tidings wer spread thro Lincolne town.[405]

404 Volume XII of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* of 1810 (p 29, § Lincoln) suggests that Grantham was the family name of the dead child, from which the well took its name: 'The Jews were once its [Lincoln's] chief inhabitants, till they were forced to remove, after having impiously crucified the child of one Grantham, and thrown it into a well, to this day called *Grantham's Well*.' However, Grantham was the name of an ancient noble family in Lincoln, seen also in the name of Grantham Street, so this is the more likely explanation for the well's name (see *Reports and Papers of the Architectural and Archaeological Societies of the Counties of Lincoln and Northampton*, 1875-6, p. 214).

405 As a speculative side note, it may be surmised from Verse 56 that Hugh was an Anglo-Saxon rather than an Anglo-Norman child, as the townsfolk immediately called for the city coroners, who came reluctantly ('*Qe i ne vindrent de bon gré*'). Both the keenness of the townsfolk for the coroners to view the child, and the slowness of the coroners to arrive, suggests that both parties knew that this was an Anglo-Saxon (i.e. English) child, and therefore

There is also evidence in the Waverley and Burton Annals that it was more than the Jew's confession which provided evidence of death by Jewish foul play. The Burton Annals (p. 343) tell us that the blind woman anointed her eyes from the bloodied wounds of the boy's body [*ex humore corporis cruentati caecos linivit oculos*], while the Waverley Annals (*Annales Monastici*, ed. Luard, 1865, Vol. II, pp. 346-348 [p. 347]) give us a post-mortem report of the corpse:

> The Christians, then, excited by these signs, hastened to that well, and seeing the venerable body floating on the water, immediately began with the greatest devotion in their hearts to draw it up from there. But with his hands and feet pierced, his head also bleeding in the form of a crown with various punctures, and the rest with open scars all around and all over his body, it was now clear to all that such a crime was authored by the detested Jews.

It is also a point of speculation as to whether Hugh had been circumcised before death. Henry Luard has stated that in the original *Chronica Majora* manuscript, at the foot of the page describing Hugh's tortures, there are the remains of a note which reads: '*…Judaei circumcidere et circumcisum Jesum vocare*' (p. 517). This hints that Hugh had been forcibly circumcised, but it is not conclusive. As with the body of William of Norwich, such trauma would have been strong evidence for the witnesses of the body's discovery to be able to decipher the nature of the crime.

There is also the following intriguing verse (verse 45) in the Anglo-Norman ballad, which gives a detail unique to all the sources, indicating that before the body was carried out of Lincoln city limits, all of the wounds on the body would be filled with melted yellow wax (!):

> *Mès devant que seit porté*
> *Hors de Nichole la cité,*
> *Tuz les plaies seient emplé*
> *De jaun cire ben boillé.*

We do not know if this element was mentioned in Copin's confession, or if melted yellow wax was found on Hugh's body, perhaps in his wounds, by the monks laying out his corpse, and so was added into the ballad as some kind of deliberate or ritual action performed by the Jews. As can be seen, the original French verse gives no reason for why the Jews would fill Hugh's wounds with yellow wax, although the translator, the Rev. Abraham Hume, with the all-too-human desire to try

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the Lincoln hundred in question would not be liable for onerous *murdrum* fine, which was exacted when the *Englishry* of the victim could not be proven. The ballad speaks of coroners in the plural, and indeed were two or four coroners for each county, knights who were not paid for the role (Gross, p. 672). The medieval coroner(s) in this case, whose office 'existed primarily for the king's profit' (Gross, p. 659), and whose inquests were held not to determine the cause of death as much as to determine the amount of the King's entitlement as a result of the death, may have found this case uninteresting due to the lack of deodand and the victim's ethnicity. Alternatively, the slowness to respond may have been due to the coroner(s) expecting to be bribed to come and view the body (Hunnisett, p. 125). Indeed, it was not uncommon for a medieval coroner to appropriate the garment of the corpse as his 'payment' (*ibid*). The corpse being a naked Anglo-Saxon child, and those 'raising the hue' being ordinary (i.e. poor) Anglo-Saxon peasants, there may have been no personal profit incentive. It should also be noted that the coroner's office was not constituted until the tail-end of the 12th century, which explains the absence of a coroner in the second most famous ritual murder allegation of medieval England, that of William of Norwich.

to make sense of the world, translates this element by adding an explanation of the wax being used as a way of disguising or sealing the injury:

> Let waxe that is yellow be melted with care,
> To cover the wounds that none lye bare.

While it is a plausible hypothesis of sorts, it is highly unlikely that the application of yellow wax would hide the evidence of the myriad injuries that Hugh had sustained prior to death, and sealing such injuries on a corpse makes no (rational) sense. It may simply be that molten wax was used as a torture method, and in this it may be useful to compare the 1168 report of Harold of Gloucester some ninety years prior, whose corpse showed signs of hot wax having been poured into his eyes and ears. Nevertheless, there may have been an unknown ritual or symbolic meaning attributed to the use of yellow wax by Hugh's killer(s), and if indeed there was yellow wax present on the boy's corpse, how and why it got there remains to be explained.

This post-mortem evidence of foul play is important, because it disrupts the apologist narrative of 'accidentally drowning in a cesspool or well' (e.g. Trollope, Jacobs, Roth, Langmuir, Selzer),[406] or the even simpler tactic of providing any explanation for the death whatsoever (Hillaby). The apologist analyses depend on the idea that it is solely Copin's confession which provides evidence of Hugh's death being a Jewish ritual murder, when there would appear to have been other material evidence. The tactic is then to cast Copin's confession itself into doubt, by both subtly casting shade on the personage of John of Lexington, the king's seneschal who extracted the confession, and by implying that the confession was gained through torture, or fear of torture (rather than a promise of immunity for 'turning approver', that is, turning king's evidence), even though, in the words of James Macmullen Rigg (p. xxxi), 'Joscepin was not tortured, nor had he reasonable cause to apprehend torture, which, though practised by King John, formed no part of the regular course of judicial procedure.' Nor was he kept for any considerable time in confinement. We can speculate

406 It is Jacobs who propagated the 'accidentally fell into a cesspool and drowned' theory, which is then treated as the most obvious explanation for Hugh's death by Roth ('…there is every reason to believe that…') in his 1941 *History of the Jews in England*. Decades later, Richard Selzer, a Jewish-American surgeon, would lift Jacobs' hypothesis wholesale and use it in his apologist short story 'Little Saint Hugh' (*Rituals of Surgery,* New York: Harper's Magazine Press, 1974), which was likely written in response to WASP fellow-physician William D. Sharpe's 1971 non-fiction piece 'Strange Murder of William of Norwich, 1144' (see Appendix I), an analysis which caused Jewish howls of protest at the time (see, for example, the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* for 30/11/1971 and 7/12/1971). Selzer not only reproduces Jacobs' idea of Hugh drowning in a cesspool and putrefying until his stomach burst, thus explaining the reported state of disembowelment, but reproduces Jacobs' theory about the wedding, and, perhaps most damagingly (to the English tradition), takes Jacobs' claim about Hugh being illegitimate even further, having the Beatrice of his tale be a 'mothering whore' who 'is but lately accorded the designation "widow"', who cared little for her son's disappearance, and who was busy satisfying a Jewish client while her son was missing. Selzer even suggests that Beatrice pleaded for the life of Peitevin because this man was one of her nocturnal clients, when the record (Patent Roll 9/12/1255 – see Sources) states that the man whose pardon she supported was Benedict fil. Mosse de Londres, known to the Jews as Rav [rabbi] Berachiah de Nicole, the greatest Jewish scholar in England at the time (Jacobs: *Little St. Hugh*, p. 102), about whom there is not the slightest hint of impropriety. The Anglo-Norman ballad (verse 59) also mentions that Hugh had a stepfather. Some may argue that such a blending of fiction with the historical record is harmless (Selzer quotes the direct speech of the *Chronica Majora* and takes elements from the even more unreliable English ballad tradition, as well as evidently making up defamatory elements of his own), but such suggestive fictional tales often end up absorbed into the collective unconscious as truth (arguably Selzer's intention, not least because another Jew, Peter Josyph, reportedly made a feature film based on Selzer's version of events). And we can see how Jacobs' unsubstantiated and implausible hypothesis of 'drowning in a cesspool' has, through diffusion over time, made its way into the Western episteme: *Harrap's Book of British Dates* (Rodney Castleden, 1991) and its 1993 abridged version, *Harrap's British Dates Mini Dictionary* ('ideal for schools and general reference'), both begin the 1255 entry with: 'A child is found drowned in a cesspool in Lincoln…'.

that many of the intimate details of the torture and killing, as outlined in the chronicles and ballad, were obtained from this confession. Note that the Anglo-Norman ballad also alleges that while it was Copin who tied the child up and kept him in his home, [*De une corde lié par Jopin li Jeu,* verse 19, *Dedenz ma meson fu imprisoné*, verse 80], the boy was ultimately delivered for a symbolic cash sum of thirty denarii to Agim,[407] and it was Agim who delivered the fatal stab wound into Hugh's side, not only piercing his heart, but slicing it in two for future medical consumption purposes.

> Agim le Ju son knivet prent
> Et perce la coste del innocent
> Et puis son quer en deus defent
> Dunques gurristrent les malveis gent.

We must presume that if such details were based on real events, rather than a popular attempt at libelling prominent local Jews (in this case two men named Peitevin and Agim), these must have come from Copin's confession. The ballad is also explicit that in his confession Copin implicated Peitevin as the Jew who abducted the boy (verse 79).[408]

Almost predictably, however, Jacobs (*Little St. Hugh*, p. 98) reports that the Close Roll of the court case, which would have contained Copin's written confession, has 'disappeared' from the archives; the only records that remain are the evidence of the Jewish prisoners being transported to London, the trial summons and the official pardon given to the great Tosafist Berechiah de Nicole who had been imprisoned with the others, as well as the provisional pardon given to a Jewish convert to Christianity. This leaves us unable to know what elements of the various chronicles and ballads originated from the confession itself, or whether the eighteen Jews who were executed for the crime after Copin,[409] were similarly drawn and hanged, as it is reported in contemporary chronicle of Arnold Fitz Thedmar (*De Antiquis Legibus Liber*, p. 23), because they refused to be tried by an all-Christian jury, or because, as the Waverley Annals states (p. 348), they had confessed with their own mouth [*et ore proprio confessi*].

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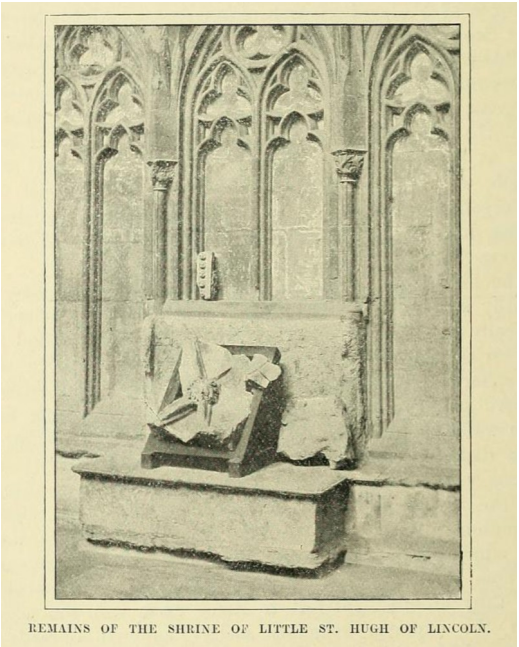
407 Jacobs (p. 108) identifies a 'Chayim de Nicole'(Nicole being the Norman French name for Lincoln) as a possible candidate for the Agim named in the ballad. This appears to be a red herring, as there existed a Jewish 'Hagin of Lincoln' (also spelled Haggim in the records), although he was not imprisoned over the 1255 case, and indeed was later (for a fee) granted the properties of hanged or imprisoned Jews, including those of the aforementioned hanged Jacob fil. Leo (Charter Roll 6/1/1257 – see Sources). For more information on Hagin of Lincoln, see *Publications of the Lincoln Record Society, Vol. 51,* pp. 90-91. Given that this Hagin also became the archpresbyter of English Jewry from 1257 to 1280, we must assume that the Agim of the ballad either referred to another person, or that this was a scurrilous libel on the part of the balladeer, as the King's appointed investigators continued to work well into 1256, and appear to have been thorough in finding out all aspects of the crime (see, for example, the Patent Roll of March 27th, 1256, referred to in Sources).

408 Regarding Peitevin (also seen as Peitivin, Peytevin), we are told in the Patent Roll of March 27th, 1256 (see Sources) that the king's investigators were instructed to enquire into who belonged to the synagogue (*scola*) of Peytevin the Great (Pictavin le Grant), who fled after Hugh's murder. This is likely to be the Peitevin of the ballad, and not the Peitevin ben Beneit who was identified by Jacobs (p. 108) as the creditor of Bardeney Abbey – indeed there were apparently several Jews with the name Peitevin in Lincoln at the time (see the *Publications of the Lincoln Record Society*, Vol. 51, p. 91 for further information).

409 According to the Norwich monk Bartholomew Cotton, on St Clement's Day (i.e. November 23rd) these eighteen prisoners, 'eighteen of the wealthiest and greatest Jews of the city of Lincoln', were dragged by horses tails around London and then hanged (i.e. drawn and hanged), while Copin was hanged, drawn and quartered, his limbs hung at the four gates of Lincoln as a memorial to the enormity of the crime. See *Bartholomaei de Cotton, Monachi Norwicensis, Historia Anglicana* (ed. Luard, 1859), Vol. IV, pp. 132-3.

Although this case has its army of apologists, there are also prominent people who have been open-minded about the possibility of this being a genuine case of ritual murder. Most notably, this was the first ritual murder allegation in England in which a monarch used his authority to intervene. King Henry III himself ordering the juridical investigation of the case on October 4th, five weeks after the discovery of the body, and the same day ordered the sheriffs of various counties and the wardens of the Cinque Ports to be on their guard for any Jew trying to flee the realm, as some reportedly did [*Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III… 1254/1256*, p. 277]. After hearing the confession, the horrified king refused to allow immunity to be granted to Copin, who was instead executed by being dragged by horses to Canwick Hill gallows, where he was hanged. It was this royal substantiation of the truth of the charge that was probably decisive for Hugh's fame, which far overshadowed all of the other ritual murder cases, although we can also assume that the obtaining of a written confession of the crime from a Jewish perpetrator would also have caused a sensation with the English people. This royal substantiation of Little Saint Hugh being a Christian martyr at the hands of Jews carried over into the reign of Henry III's successor, Edward I, who had a shrine tabernacle erected in Lincoln Cathedral to honour the martyr, most likely begun at some time between 1290-1295, and using expertise from the royal workshops. The tabernacle had four shields prominently displaying the royal arms to cement the connection between Little Saint Hugh and the Crown in the eyes of the faithful (Stocker, pp. 114-5). Edward was also the sole monarch to give alms to the shrine of Little Saint Hugh, which he did in 1299/1300 (*idem*. p. 109).[410] Interestingly, as an apparent gesture of respect, the remains of the destroyed tabernacle were placed on the boy's tomb in a later era, where they remained until at least the early 20th century, as seen in this photograph taken from D. H. Traill's book *Social England* (1901).



REMAINS OF THE SHRINE OF LITTLE ST. HUGH OF LINCOLN.

410 See the front cover of this volume for the Dugdale engraving of this tabernacle, taken from page 143 of D'Blossiers Tovey's *Anglia Judaica* (1738), who himself took it from Dr. Stukeley's *Itinerarium Curiosum* (1724). Note that Stukeley appears to have erred in his labelling of the tabernacle, which he believed was that of St. Hugh of Avalon (i.e. the canonised bishop also known as St. Hugh of Lincoln). For evidence that this is indeed the tabernacle of Little Saint Hugh, see Stocker (as above), and Tovey pp. 141-5, who reproduces the 1736 letter of antiquarian Smart Lethieullier and gives his own opinion on the matter. Based on donation records, the cult of the child saint appears to have been moribund by the early 15th century, but the tabernacle itself appears to have remained intact until the English Civil War, when it was likely destroyed during the summer of 1644 (Stocker, p. 109), but luckily survived long enough to be recorded for posterity by William Dugdale's engraving of 1641. It survived the ravages of the Reformation due to it being made of Purbeck marble, rather than the gold of the shrine of St. Hugh the bishop, or the silver of that of St. John of Dalderby, so escaping the avarice of Henry III's plunderers (Lethieullier).

The modern era has also seen prominent individuals prepared to judge the case on its merits. The declared philo-Semitic legal scholar James Macmullen Rigg (1855-1926), after his careful analysis of the original documents [Rigg, *Select Pleas*, pp. xxx-xxxii], is forced to make the following judgement after laying out many points which give credence to the accusation: 'We must therefore be content to suspend judgment on this singular case until some document shall leap to light which may enable us to pronounce decisively as to its merits.'

Another eminent man who has shown himself to be open-minded, if not an active believer, vis-à-vis the ritual murder accusation, is the Rev. Canon Henry Charles Beeching (1859-1919), who used one of his 'Provincial Letters' series in *The Cornhill Magazine* to push back against Dr. Joseph Jacobs' attempts to impose a new historiography on the Hugh of Lincoln case.[411] Indeed, sensing his irritation, one suspects that Beeching wrote the Lincoln letter out of a desire to discuss and refute Dr. Jacobs' allegations, and defend the traditional English/Christian historiography of Jewish ritual murder more generally.[412] Such is the rarity of a member of the British Establishment publicly defending the English episteme from Jewish revisionist historiography, I shall quote elements of this 1901 article, along with the image to which it refers, and urge the curious to read Beeching's article in its entirety if they wish to judge his case for themselves.[413] It should be noted that Beeching wrote these articles pseudonymously (as 'Urbanus Sylvan'), and significantly, when Beeching's journalistic writings were compiled into the 1906 book *Provincial Letters and Other Papers*, the Lincoln letter was omitted. There can be no doubt that it was because it had been judged too controversial, especially as Beeching had been made Canon of Westminster in the meantime.[414]

Beeching is scathing about Jacobs' seminal 1896 essay on Little Saint Hugh, written just a few years previously, which he presents to readers as having been lent to him by a friend who wished to prove that the Hugh of Lincoln case was 'a mere myth' (p. 116):

> My friend then offered to lend me the book to which I have referred – a tractate by a learned Jew, Mr. Joseph Jacobs, who had, he said, completely knocked the bottom out of the little saint's shrine; and in return I promised to point out to him in the town library the report of the case in the contemporary chronicle of the Abbey of Burton-on-Trent. I found, however, that Mr. Jacobs, in a very scholarly manner, prints all the original documents in an appendix to his tract, though I also found he had in some particulars read them with too little attention.

411 See: 'Provincial Letters. IV. From Lincoln' in *The Cornhill Magazine*, Vol. 11, Issue 61 (July 1901).

412 We also find a subtle but firm defence of English historiography from an anonymous book reviewer in 1896, when, after praising many of the essays in Joseph Jacobs' new book *Jewish Ideals and Other Essays* (which also contains Jacobs' essay about Little St Hugh), the reviewer goes on to say: '…but in Little St. Hugh of Lincoln the author gets on very delicate ground which had best be left alone; and though he discusses it successfully from one point of view, others remain.' See the *Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review and Oriental and Colonial Record*, 3rd Series, Vol. 1, Issues 1 & 2 (January-April, 1896), p. 451.

413 To underscore the rarity of his position, readers may wish to compare Beeching's article with that of his fellow Anglican clergyman the Rev. Edward Trollope, Bishop Suffragan of Nottingham, who in 1880 penned the article 'Little St. Hugh of Lincoln' in which he wrote (p. 127): 'Undoubtedly this poor little boy died through misadventure, and probably through falling into a well while at play…' and 'None seem to have thought it possible that little Hugh could have died accidentally, but the mother's antipathy towards the Jews, which was doubtless a feeling common to most others, unfortunately led her to suspect foul play on their part.' Trollope says nothing of the fact that the body was reportedly found naked, disembowelled, and with a multitude of other man-made injuries. See *Associated Architectural Societies Reports and Papers*, Volume XV, pp. 126-131.

414 It may also have been judged to be politically dangerous, given the powerful Jewish friends known to surround the king at this time (see Volume 7 of this study).

Beeching then goes on to take issue with various points in Jacobs' argument, including highlighting a common technique used by modern revisionist historians,[415] when he chides Jacobs for his diminishing way of referring to John of Lexington, the man put in charge of the murder investigation (pp. 117-8):

> Mr. Jacobs, who naturally wishes to raise prejudice against the Court, calls him 'one John of Lexington,' and speaks of him as though he were a busybody who happened to be on the spot and took an interest in the case. But as the life in the Dictionary of National Biography will show, he was a baron of great consequence, king's seneschal, and chief justice of the Forest north of Trent.

He follows with an alternative view of Jacobs' presentation of the judicial handling by Lexington, who is referred to as 'a prudent and discreet man, and expert in both canon and civil law' [*vir providus et discretus, et in utroque jure, canonico scilicet et civil, peritus*] in the Burton Annals, the relevant passage of which Jacobs has himself reproduced in an appendix for his readers.

Beeching then moves on to another aspect of the case (p. 119):

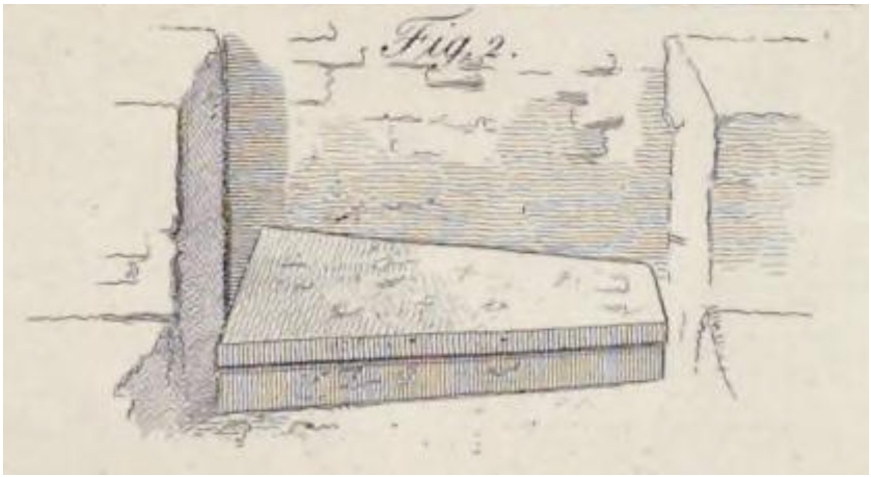
> There is one small point, which Mr. Jacobs has not noticed, that tends to confirm the accuracy of the story in the Burton Chronicle. He gives, as I said above, a picture of the skeleton of the little saint in his coffin, but professes, as he does so, that it affords no evidence one way or another, except to show that 'no very extreme violence can have been used.' But one small detail is of great importance. In the upper jaw the teeth are gone, in the lower jaw they are perfect. Now the Chronicle says explicitly that it was the upper teeth that were broken. 'Nasi cartilaginem cum superiori labio reciderunt, principales dentium confringentes *superiores*.' This does not necessarily bring the blame home to the Jews, but it does prove that the person who drew up the confession, whether Lexington or Copin, knew what he was talking about. As an Englishman I naturally incline to suspect Copin, just as Mr. Jacobs might as naturally incline to suspect Lexington.

415 This subtle slighting of individuals so that readers do not identify with them is not only routinely done to powerful figures who stand in the way of Jewish interests, but also to the alleged victims of Jews. In this latter case, Jacobs, without citing a source, describes Hugh as 'the illegitimate son of a woman named Beatrice', when most if not all sources describe her as 'widowed', an evident ploy to portray the child as 'low-born', and therefore somehow more deserving of his fate.

The images that Beeching refers to, as reproduced above, were created on the occasion of the little saint's tomb being opened, an event which is worth describing for the potential material evidence it may provide. Sources vary in their dating of this event. Many sources give 1790, with Bishop Trollope giving the very specific date of the 25th August, 1790, while other authors, such as Sir Francis Hill (p. 229), assert just as firmly that it was 1791. In the meantime, the most complete and contemporaneous source for this incident, a report in Gough's *Sepulchral Monuments of Great Britain* (1796), states that the opening took place on the 25th August 1792. The following are extracts reproduced verbatim from this latter report (Vol. II, Part I, pp. lxx-lxxiii), the report's source appearing to have been the cathedral's precentor Dr. Gordon.

> The workmen having reported, that on removing the old pavement they had discovered something like a stone coffin, the present occasion offered by the new pavement was properly improved for prosecuting the search; and the late Precentor, whose spirit of investigation into these matters cannot be enough commended, availed himself of the arrival of the Dean, and the concurrence of the Chancellor, to carry this design into execution. On Thursday, Aug. 25, being assembled on the spot, the bases and step were removed, not without some labour, and presented a covering stone adapted to the proportion of the body presumed to be concealed under it. No sooner was the covering lifted up then the expected stone coffin appeared lying level with the pavement. Its dimensions were found to be in length three feet nine inches and an half; in width at the East end fifteen inches and an half; at the West twenty-one. At the depth of two inches and an half below the edge was a sheet of thin lead, which being taken off disclosed in a lead coffin the complete skeleton of a boy three feet three inches long; the bones remarkably firm, particularly the vertebrae. The head was uncommonly large, a

> disproportion usual in infancy, and was visibly raised in the coffin; the under jaw was distorted, and fallen, and which was a circumstance peculiarly remarkable, the two front teeth next to the eye teeth on each side of the two fore-teeth, both in the upper and lower jaw, had not grown half way out of the socket before the death of the lad, and were capable of being pushed up and down, as was proved by experiment in one of the upper set. The Annals of Burton relate a remarkable circumstance here, that the Jews cut off the child's nose and upper-lip, and broke his principal upper teeth (*principales dentium confringentes superiores*). The bones of the hands had separated, but those of the feet remained *in situ*, in the original wrapper, very small portions of which were existing and discoverable adhering to the skull. The vertebrae of the neck felt like the substance of a cork. There was no appearance of hair on the head, but very fine flaxen hair appeared upon the petrosal. No marks of violence appeared to have been inflicted on the bones. These were probably, as the Historian represents them, only flesh wounds, with the point of their *anelaces* or knives. No. 2 is a drawing of the body in the leaden coffin, taken on the spot by Mr. Grimm.

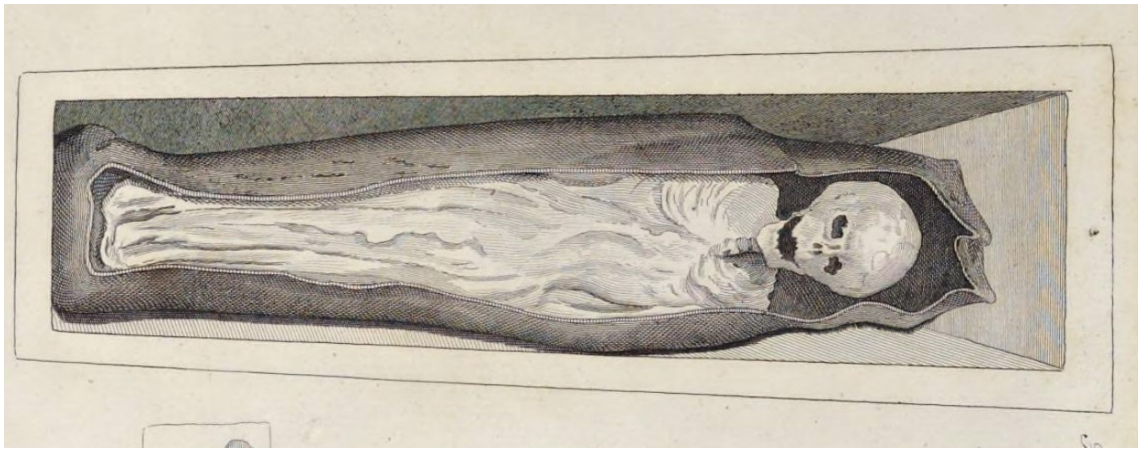


Gough's report then describes at length the state and construction of the coffin,[416] including an apparent drainage system, and gives compelling evidence that the body had been re-interred at some point prior to the Dissolution of the Monasteries, moving the body from its placement in the tabernacle above ground to under the floor of the shrine, in order to hide it from those who would, by order of Henry VIII, destroy it as a manifestation of superstition and idolatry; this infelicitous translation is supposed to have caused 'the decay of this body, and consumption of all its fleshy parts'. The report continues:

> Whether the child was actually *crucified*, it is now impossible to ascertain: that it was murdered in some very cruel manner, we have every traditional and historical evidence to believe. For we cannot suppose, even in times when the laws were not so well defined, and the administration of justice was more arbitrary, that so many would have

416 Despite its extensive description of the tomb, the report does not mention any words inscribed in or around the area, but as Vol. XLVI (p. 159) of the *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* for 1895 informs us: '…it was only in 1791 that a tomb with "Parvus S'tus Hugo" was discovered in the south aisle of Lincoln Cathedral, exactly corroborating the tradition handed down.' This leaves us in no doubt that the child's remains that were examined were those of Little Saint Hugh.

been found guilty and have suffered for a crime, if there had been no foundation for the accusation. The *ut dicebatur*, if not words of form in such grants, do not imply any doubt of the murder, but the manner of it. It is true no marks of violence could be discovered on the skeleton. But one circumstance seemed curious. On examining the body in the vestry, whither it was removed in the leaden *envelope* after its disinterment, one of the *metatarsal* bones appeared to have its outward coat or enamel scraped off pretty deep into the *earthy table*. Whether this might have been forced off by the driving of a nail through the foot, or whether it had been a quicker decay of the bone in that part, cannot be determined; but it certainly exhibited an appearance very different to the other bones of the same part, as the Dean and other gentlemen who were present thought. No dust appearing in the chest or abdomen corroborates the account about embowelling the body. Some gentlemen of the faculty declared it to be a *male* child, from the suture of the skull, and other characteristic marks. After the curiosity of the inhabitants in viewing the body was satisfied, it was re-interred on the Saturday morning, in the presence of the Dean; and every thing placed in the same situation as before.



On the subject of this degraded metatarsal bone, it is explicitly stated in verse 29 of the Anglo-Norman ballad that the child had nails driven through his hands and feet as part of the crucifixion ritual.[417] It should also be noted that the 'lack of dust' that was observed, if it indeed proceeded from a disembowelling, may have been due to the preparation of the body prior to burial, as medieval embalming practices usually involved removing the viscera.[418]

The report from Dr. Gordon on the coffin opening also appears to contradict an element of the second-hand report in Hill (p. 229), in which famed naturalist Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820) took the lead in proceedings, assisted by his friend Sir Richard Kaye (Dean of Lincoln and keen antiquarian), and others who were present, including the Swiss artist Samuel Hieronymus Grimm, who was charged by his patron Kaye with sketching the boy's tomb as it was opened, and who is

417 'Ses braz furent estendu / Sur la croix si lie cum il fu / Et percé furent par mainz de Ju / Ses pez, ces meinz, des clous agu.'

418 See, for example, Anna M. Duch: *The Royal Funerary and Burial Ceremonies of Medieval English Kings: 1216-1509*, (passim), 2016, PhD Thesis, University of York, available at: https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/13700/1/AM%20Duch%20-%20Deposit%20Final%20Thesis.pdf

responsible for the pictures featured here.[419] This second account states that when the coffin was opened, the boy's body had been found to be buried in accordance with the most advanced preservational burial practices of the time, i.e. wrapped in a cerecloth and bathed in 'a kind of pickle' or 'liquor', which Sir Joseph, with a curiosity proper to the President of the Royal Society in the *Age of Reason*, is said to have tasted.[420]

To add to the contradictions, the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, Vol. 35 (1879), gives the following tantalising short note about the event: 'This tomb was opened in the last century, and a child's skull found within, retaining fractures ascribable probably to a violent death' (p. 381), although no source for this information is provided. Even if this statement is correct, in itself it gives no conclusive evidence as to the nature of Hugh's death: the fractures may have come from (for example) Hugh falling into a well, or they may have come from him being thrown in a well post-mortem.

Further testimonies can be found in two excerpts from the letters of Rev. Father James Laurenson, S.J., a Catholic missioner living in Lincoln fifty years after the event. The first excerpt comes from a letter to Dr. Oliver, dated April 14th, 1831, and says the following:

> I have lately made the tour, at two or three different times, of 'the pride and glory of Lincoln.' The more I see of it the more I find to admire. I think they do very little to keep this noble fabric in repair, considering the immense income. The east end is really a disgrace to them. Here lies the great St. Hugh, but not a vestige of his once magnificent shrine is now remaining. A plain marble slab marks the spot where repose the ashes of this great and holy prelate.
>
> In passing by the shrine of the little St. Hugh, I was assured of a curious fact, and it is told by old Marshall who shows you round, and is fully confirmed by the Wilsons and others. Not many years since they had occasion to repair the flags in the south aisle, where the mutilated shrine of the blessed little martyr stood. His remains were in a marble coffin, elevated above the pavement, and were removed into adjoining sacristy. Curiosity prompted several to examine the contents. Among the rest were old Marshall and Dr. Beattie, now practising in the town. Upon removing the marble top they found a lead coffin within, on opening which the body of the young saint was, to their astonishment, discerned quite perfect, and undecayed. It was replaced immediately, and the coffin as it now is, removed to its former station; not however, before the Doctor took his fee, for he cut off one of the fingers, and still boasts of having this precious relic in his possession, and a lock of his beautiful auburn hair…

The second letter to Dr. Oliver is dated 31st August, 1831:

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419 Aside from the precentor Dr. Gordon, the naturalist Joseph Banks, the dean Richard Kaye and the artist Samuel Grimm, we know that there were at least three other men present: Dr. Beattie (a local doctor), the Rev. Mr. Carter of Lincoln (Gough, p. lxxi), and Marshall, who appears to have been cathedral staff, perhaps a beadle or caretaker.

420 Hill cites the 1880 *Lincoln Pocket Guide* (Anderson, p. 117), which cites no source, but this may have been John Manners' 1813 *Journal of a Tour…* (p. 38), which briefly states that on the tomb being opened: 'Little Saint Hugh was found floating in a sort of pickle, of which Sir Joseph Banks, who was present, tasted with great goût.' It is therefore unclear to what extent this story is simply urban legend, however, it is almost guaranteed that Sir Joseph, a prolific letter-writer, gave an objective report of the tomb opening to at least one of his correspondents, and an examination of the unpublished archive of his writings will undoubtedly yield the solution to this mystery.

> Since last I wrote to you I have seen Dr. Beattie, and he tells me that it was in 1791 that the body of little St. Hugh was exposed. He obtained a finger and a lock of the hair, which were plundered from him subsequently, and which he told me he greatly regretted. His account of the state of the body does not bear out old Marshall, for he says it was quite in a skeleton state, and that the skin which remained was quite dry and of a tan colour. The child could not have been more than seven or eight years old. He also adds, that the hands seem to have been mutilated, as if something had been driven through them, and the body is still, he says, in the same stone coffin, and replaced in the same spot as formerly, above ground.[421]

That the body was exposed to the public from the Thursday of its disinterment to the Saturday morning of its reburial, as per the Gough report, is supported by Henry Digby Beste (1768-1836), who writes the following in 1829:

> At the time of the re-paving of the church, about fifty years ago, these grave-stones were removed from over the graves they covered: the stone coffins were, in some instances, on a level with the pavement, and what was in them was within the reach of curious and childish spoilers. It was then that the Minster ought to have been kept under lock and key. A small portion of the silken pontifical robe of Bishop Grosstête, or Greathead, was presented as a gallant offering to a lady fair, while I remember to have broken off the toe of a foot that stood out beyond the wrappers in which an embalmed body was involved. In excuse of this act, let me observe that it was not done in boyish sport, but in solemn thoughtfulness. The small limb yielded to the pressure of my finger: it was brittle and dry, and throughout of a light pink colour. The boy was, I believe, that of little Saint Hugh; the child crucified by the Jews in hatred of the Christian religion…[422]

All of this is mentioned to emphasise that, should an 800-year-old post-mortem ever be performed on the remains of Little Saint Hugh, these ‘solemnly thoughtful’ desecrations (and perhaps others not recorded for posterity) have impacted on the material evidence, meaning that body parts missing from the corpse may not necessarily be indicative of the events of 1255.

Up until 1959, there had been a notice in the Angel Choir which told the traditional tale of the martyrdom of Little St. Hugh, although it ended by questioning the facticity of the tradition. However, at some point in the aforesaid year, this notice was replaced with one which described the reports of Jewish ritual murder as ‘trumped up stories’ and ‘fictions’ which ‘cost many innocent Jews their lives’, and which asked God’s forgiveness for past Christian sins. News of this change in signage was not only reported in the national press of Great Britain (e.g. *Daily Telegraph*, 15th October, 1959, p. 19) but was also reported as far afield as the USA, with an article on this event being printed in *Time* magazine that same year (LXXIV, No. 18, November 2nd, 1959, p. 77).

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421 Excerpts reproduced from Henry Foley’s *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus* (The Manresa Press, 1875), pp. 652-3.

422 *Personal and Literary Memorials* (London: Henry Colburn), pp. 243-4.

Sources: It is impossible to analyse all of the historical references to this case, including the legends, as this would require a book-length study, but researchers wishing to know more should first refer to the four main primary sources – Matthew Paris, the Burton and Waverley annals, and the Anglo-Norman ballad of Hugh of Lincoln. Matthew Paris's account can be found in *Monarchi Sancti Albani, Chronica Majora* (ed. Luard, London: Longman, 1880), Vol. 5, pp. 516-519, 546, 552. The Burton and Waverley Annals can be found in the *Annales Monastici* (1864-9, ed. Luard): Vol. I, pp. 340-348, 371, and Vol. II, pp. 346-348 respectively. The Anglo-Norman ballad and its English translation can be found in the Rev. Abraham Hume's 1849 *Sir Hugh of Lincoln: or an Examination of a Curious Tradition.…*, which usefully also contains various English ballads, including the most famous one of Chaucer (none of which are historically reliable, but useful for tracing popular perceptions of the event) and the short reports from other contemporary chroniclers, Robert of Gloucester, Grafton, Fabyan and Holinshed, for comparison. Capgrave's report, which is essentially a reformulation of Matthew Paris's account, but which comes with an introduction that historical researchers may find to be of interest, can be found in Vol. XXXIII of the *Acta Sanctorum* (ed. Carnandet, Paris: Victor Palmé, 1865), pp. 494-5. There is also a plethora of secondary sources of varying reliability, including Sir Francis Hill's *Medieval Lincoln*, Rigg: *Select Pleas.…*, pp. xxx–xxxii; Jacobs: *Little St. Hugh of Lincoln.…*; Langmuir; Hillaby. pp. 91-3 [all sources partially referenced in this appendix can be found in the Translator's Bibliography].

There are also the Close, Patent, Charter and Fine Rolls [known collectively as Chancery Rolls], all of which concern the administrative procedures around the Jews who were captured and imprisoned (some of whom were hanged, others eventually freed as an act of mercy, or occasionally freed after being pardoned), as well as the Jews who fled, including the details of how the king disposed of these Jews' property and settled their outstanding financial affairs (where applicable).

The following is a list of the Patent Roll entries regarding the case, found in *Calendar of the Patent Rolls.… A.D. 1247-1258* (London, 1908): 40 Henry III, 1255, membrane 20 (26th November 1255), pp. 451-2; 40 Henry III, 1255, membrane 19, (9th December 1255), p. 453; 40 Henry III, 1256, membrane 18 (10th January 1256), p. 457; 40 Henry III, 1256, membrane 17d (27th March 1256), p. 510; 40 Henry III, 1256, membrane 5 (20th August 1256), p. 493.

The Charter Roll entries deal with details of houses taken from hanged Jews and awarded to others, in these examples both Christian and Jewish, and can be found in Volume I of *Calendar of the Charter Rolls.… A. D. 1225-1257* (London, 1908): 41 Henry III, 1257, membrane 9 (6th Jan 1257), p. 460 and membrane 6 (9th April 1257), p. 467.

The Close Roll references pertaining to the case (note that they have been published in the original Latin): *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III.… A.D. 1254/1256* (London, 1931): 39 Henry III, 1255, membrane 2, pp. 142-3, pp. 145-6 and membrane 5d, p. 227; 40 Henry III, 1255, membrane 13, p. 285; membrane 16d, p. 394; and membrane 20, p. 241. *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III.… A.D. 1256-1259* (London, 1932): 41 Henry III, 1257, membrane 12, p. 23; 42 Henry III, 1258, membrane 6, pp. 236-7 and membrane 6d, pp. 318-9.

Other sources include the letter dated Jan 7th, 1256, from Henry III to the Sheriff of London (Royal Letters, no. 193) in *Royal and Other Historical Letters Illustrative of the Reign of Henry III* (ed. Shirley, 1868, Vol II, p. 110); an entry (on p. 23) in *De Antiquis Legibus Liber* (ed. Stapleton, 1844); and Fine Roll entries (in Latin) in *Excerpta è rotulis finium in turri Londinensi asservatis Henrico Tertio Rege* (1836), Vol. II, pp. 240-1 (membrane 3, 40 Henry III, 1256) and p. 255 (membrane 6, 41 Hen. III, 1257).

1257 – LONDON.

‘In London, the wickedness of the Jews was made evident when they slaughtered a Christian child to fulfil their annual sacrifice. Some of the perpetrators of this crime were put to death: many of them were freed by the intercession of the Negri brothers, who corrupted the authorities by means of money.’ Source: Cluverius, p. 483, col. 2 [see Translator’s Bibliography].

1276 (?) – LONDON.

An accusation of ritual murder is made against the Jews after a boy’s body found at the hythe [‘landing-place or port for boats’] of Dowgate, where the Walbrook flowed into the Thames. The following extract is from pages 273-4 of *Calendar of the Close Rolls, Edward I.: Volume I, A.D. 1272-1279*. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode (1900), which is a modern English rendering of Close Roll of the Realm, 4 Edward I, membrane 14 (for the entry of 3rd March, 1276):

> March 3, 1276, Liddington:
>
> To Master Roger de Seyton and his fellows, justices in eyre [circuit judges] at the Tower of London. The king has heard and understood the tenor of their letters to him concerning the deed touching the community of the Jews of London by reason of the death of a Christian boy, who was crucified by them, and who was irreverently and miserably slain, in offence of the name of Jesus Christ and against the peace of the realm, and who was thrown on shore at Douegate by inundation of the water of [the] Thames, into which the Jews had secretly thrown him, and who was there found, and the king has taken advice and diligently laboured as to what may be done most wholesomely and securely in this behalf; the king, both because he wishes to have special conference (*tractatum*) with the aforesaid justices and with the justices appointed for the custody of the Jews and also with his councillors concerning so detestable a deed and as to how it ought to be punished in accordance with justice, and he wishes to be certified by the said justices in eyre by word of mouth concerning these things, and because he proposes to ordain shortly concerning some other things touching the said Jews and his Jewry, orders the said justices to adjourn the Jews before him in his parliament at London in a month from Easter, there to do and receive what the king shall cause to be provided by his council in the premises, and to permit the Jews to have peace in the meantime concerning these and other matters touching them by reason of the Jewry.

There is no known later mention of the case in the records. An earlier entry for that year (Membrane 15, pp. 271-2), which corresponds to a hearing which took place on February 21st, at Compton, indicates that this unresolved charge against the Jews for ‘the death of a Christian boy slain at Duuegate within the city of London and with certain other trespasses’ dated back to ‘the late

king's time', which would mean that this child's death dated back to at least 1272, if not before. Based on the content of both entries in the *Calendar*, the king (perhaps just as the king before him) appeared to be working continuously to forestall proceedings against 'the king's Jews of London' (Jan. 18, Winchester) regarding these allegations, and it is likely that, as Rokéah theorises (*The State…*, p. 110), the Jews 'found it worthwhile to "purchase" a permanent adjournment of the case'.

1279 – NORTHAMPTON.

'A boy was crucified by the Jews on the day of the Adoration of the Holy Cross [Good Friday], but was not quite killed; notwithstanding, under this pretext, numbers of the Jews were torn to pieces by horses in London, and their corpses hung on the gibbet, immediately after Easter [April 2nd].' This is taken from *The Chronicle of Florence of Worcester* (Forester, p. 361), which copied the information from the earlier Bury Chronicle.[423] This same information is later conveyed in the monk Bartholomew de Cotton's chronicle (*Bartholomaei de Cotton, Monachi Norwiciensis, Historia Anglicana*, ed. Luard, 1859, p. 159) and in that of John of Oxnead (*Chronica Johannis de Oxenedes*, 1859, ed. Ellis, p. 254). Note the rare intervention of the Crown, which allows this punishment of the Jews. Note also that other sources (e.g. Desportes, p. 67) have the incident as taking place in London, perhaps because this was the scene of the punishment (Northampton Jews having been transported to London to be tried and punished for a capital crime), while Haydn (§ Jews) has this crucifixion taking place in Northampton, but in 1282, and specifies the number of Jews drawn and hanged as fifty (note that this entry can be found in the 1841-1847 editions, but by the 1860 edition it is absent).

1290 – OXFORD.

In the *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Edward I, A.D. 1281-1292* (London: Eyre and Spottiswood, 1893), we find on page 402 (Patent Roll 18 Edward I, mem. 21d), the following entries for Westminster, June 21st 1290:

> Commission to J. de Cobbeham and R. de Sandwico to deliver the gaol of the Tower of London of Isaac de Pulet, Jew of London, detained there for the death of a Christian boy killed in the king's Jewry of Oxford, and of Coradinus le Furbur and Joan daughter of Stephen de la Marche killed in the city of London.
>
> The like to the same to deliver the said gaol of Joceus of Newebyry, Jew, and Isaac de Pulet, Jew of London, detained for counterfeiting the seals of the abbot and convent of Radinges and sealing with the counterfeits false writings in the names of the abbot and convent and certain Jews involving large sums, and for other felonies in divers parts of the realm.

423 This is according to the English translator of the complete Bury Chronicle, Antonia Gransden, who states that the Bury Chronicle is 'the only known authority' for this alleged event (*The Chronicle of Bury St. Edmunds, 1212-1301*, (ed.) A. Gransden, London: Nelson, 1964, p. xxii).

This ‘Christian boy’ is shown from the earlier roll entries of April 28th and September 22nd, 1286 (14 Edward I, membranes 17d and 3d, pp. 258-9) to be William de Prun/Proene. Details of this killing are found in several entries of the Oxford Eyre roll for 1285, as reproduced in Rogers’ *Oxford City Documents*. There are three detailed entries in the 1285 roll – § 89 (p. 219), § 97 (p. 221-2), § 98 (p. 222-3), with § 97 being particularly rich in information. It states that William was killed during Pentecost, during the 12th regnal year of Edward I [i.e. at some point in May/June 1284], outside the North Gate, twelve feet from the eastern side of the cemetery of the Church of the Blessed Mary Magdalene. Isaac killed William with premeditation, first insulting him then stabbing him with a sword [gladius] made of Cologne steel. The wound, some three inches below the right breast, was about four inches wide (the same width as the blade), and reached the heart, resulting in William’s immediate death. An account of the killing found in another legal document (Rokéah, *Crime and Jews*, p. 147) shows some slight differences: ‘Isaac, the son of Isaac of Pulet, a Jew, struck a certain male child with his knife in the belly, whereupon he died the second day after the event took place in the Oxford Jewry.’ Note that the location of the second account is the Oxford Jewry, and the slain William described as a ‘male child’ (*puerum masculum*), although there is no indication of the boy’s age or stage of development in any of the reports (cf. the *Calendar* entry’s similar description of the victim as a ‘*pueri Christiani*’). Additional information provided by § 98 is that the killing took place in the presence of William’s father Simon and his brother John (both appellants in the case), who alleged that Isaac’s wife Rebecca had egged her husband on in the act.

It would appear from the 1290 *Calendar* entry above that the accused Isaac de Pulet had been bailed at some point after the killing, in Roth’s words, ‘possibly during an unrecorded interlude of freedom’ (p. 52),[424] and had gone on to kill another two individuals. Rokéah (*idem*) reproduces the original Latin to demonstrate that there is no possible error or ambiguity in the translation.[425] It does indeed appear that this individual had killed three people, and was simultaneously being delivered to the Tower of London for separate fraud charges.

Less than a month after these *Calendar* entries were recorded at Westminster, on 18th July, 1290, Edward I issued his infamous Edict of Expulsion, which makes one wonder if it was this particular day of Jewish crime that proved to be the final straw for the English monarch’s tolerance, just as in France the murder of Richard of Pontoise in 1181 was what ostensibly motivated Philip II to expel the Jews from his royal domain in 1182 (Rose, p. 220), and the murder of the so-called Holy Child of La Guardia (1491) was allegedly what impelled King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella to issue the Alhambra Decree of March 31st, 1492, the edict itself indirectly referencing the ‘serious and detestable crime’ (Walsh, p. 345). There is no evidence that this 1290 killing was a ritual murder, but it is nevertheless the murder of a Christian child, and when taken in conjunction with the audacious Jewish fraud against the church which was considered the same day, it may be that it was at this point that Edward I, who, ‘like Philip [II of France] before him, had a strong interest in documenting both the alleged criminality of the Jews and defining the crown’s position as a staunch defender of the Christians of his nation’ (Rose, p. 226), finally decided to accede to the popular clamour.

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424 Roth discusses both Isaac and his father’s respective cases in *The Jews of Medieval Oxford* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951). However, his words have had to be quoted indirectly, his book having proven impossible to obtain.

425 For those confused by the accused’s name varying between ‘Isaac, son of Isaac de Pulet’ and ‘Isaac de Pulet’ in the documents, it would appear that ‘Isaac, son of Isaac de Pulet’ eventually took on the name ‘Isaac de Pulet’ when his father, the original ‘Isaac de Pulet’, was hanged sometime around 1285. See *Calendar of the Close Rolls… Edward I, A.D. 1279-1288* (pp. 349-50) for the Close Roll entry of Jan 20th 1285 (membrane 10d), which mentions that the charters and other muniments of ‘Isaac Pulet, a Jew of Oxford, lately hanged’ were in the treasury.

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